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FIRST THINGS

MARCH 1999
NUMBER 91

J. BUDZISZEWSKI
The Future of the End of Democracy

DANA MACK
The Parent Trap Times Three

JOHN MILBANK
The Ethics of Self-Sacrifice

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RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS
THE PUBLIC SQUARE
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FIRST THINGS

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FIRST THINGS

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The Contraception Debate

Louis Dupré has suggested that the hallmark of modernity is the belief that things which can be distinguished logically can exist separately. Several of the contributors to the symposium on contraception suffer from the same weak philosophy of being that gave rise to that belief ("Contraception: A Symposium," December 1998). They claim that one's commitment to a certain way of life is not contradicted, much less eroded, by a series of premeditated violations of that very way of life. Even if their claim does not entail a logical contradiction, it is at least a clear indication that contraception has, for them, no troublesome ontological implications.

These contributors view natural law as fundamentally extrinsic to the human person, rather than as an integral part of his being. Of course, this presupposition determines both their selection and their interpretation of evidence. Their conclusion, then, that apparent material contradictions of natural law call its coherence or force into question is unsurprising. As J. Budziszewski points out, they believe that "because they can sever the *causal* link between sex and procreation, they suppose that they have severed the *link* between sex and procreation," or, to be more precise, they suppose that the link exists only accidentally. Such critics often believe that *Humanae Vitae* reduces the human to the biological—the so-called "naturalistic fallacy." Yet, as John Paul II has observed, they fail to realize that their criticism is itself based on a prior, unwarranted reduction of the natural to the material—the real naturalistic fallacy.

I am not well versed in Protestant theology, but I would be surprised to discover that the Protestant contributors' position on contraception owes nothing to their soteriology. Such a connection is certainly present in the work of certain Catholic theologians (in which I *am* very well versed) who argue that once one has chosen the "fundamental option" for God, even gravely sinful acts do not separate one from sanctifying grace or otherwise erode one's inclination to virtue.

We should realize, however, that there is probably more at work here than an intellectual error, for things are received in the manner of the receiver. These contributors approach *Humanae Vitae* already suspicious of natural law, indeed, of reason itself. Moreover, as Eric Chevlen notes, self-interest often interferes with moral reasoning, and if one is already interested in the contraceptive way of life, one may not be open to *Humanae Vitae* for reasons that have little to do with the strength of its arguments.

Be that as it may, there are far-reaching implications for moral philosophy and theology if these contributors are correct. What ought to concern them is that the theory of human action implied by their position cannot be confined to contraception, for there is no action that cannot be justified if we grant that a principle is somehow compatible with its own violation.

Mitchell Muncy
Dallas, TX

Several contributors to the symposium state that there is no scriptural basis for the prohibition against contraception. May I draw their attention to Galatians 5:19-21, a catalogue of sins which St. Paul condemns as "works of the flesh"? Among them in the original Greek is *pharmakeia,* which is usually translated as "sorcery" but which in the first century A.D. specifically referred to the mixing of potions for illicit purposes, including the prevention of pregnancy. Both potential meanings are to the point. A

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couple who put a plug on their fertility may be acting out a kind of "sorcery" whose purpose is to gain control over nature by wrongful means. This attitude is at complete variance to that behind Natural Family Planning (NFP), wherein a couple who have reason to space their children accept the gift of sexuality exactly as it is stamped in the human person by God and do not treat their fertility as a problem to be expunged by technology.

George Sim Johnston
New York, NY

A little thought about natural law makes clear that there is no other species than man so endowed with the possibilities of its own protection and thoughtful promulgation; no other species that can display such a reverence for life that it can fight against the dying of the light; no other that can so protect its weakest, most vulnerable members. And no other species is so prone to abuse these possibilities for an activity the pleasure of which is fleeting and the position ridiculous.

There is talk of the "unitive" value of infertile copulation. As the female of the species is fertile but ten days out of each twenty-eight, and it is possible to determine the days, why do the other eighteen not suffice? Against which socioeconomic level are family prevention programs aimed? Why does population control sound like a police action? What is this erotic religion that promotes lust and forbids fertility? Have our doctors not enough work that they must treat pregnancy as a disease, a condition to be avoided?

Gabriel Austin
New York, NY

In his contribution to the symposium, Archbishop Charles J. Chaput refers to Paul VI as a prophet. I think the archbishop is confused. Likewise, FIRST THINGS' questions and your contributors' answers show a fundamental misunderstanding of the charism of the papacy and the function of the mystical body.

The Pope is the keeper of the keys. It is not his job to frame an argument; convince the higher clergy and rank-and-file Roman Catholics of its correctness; communicate his message well; ground the message in Scripture; or expand the message beyond a "Catholic issue."

The fact that FIRST THINGS accepts the question as framed by society—how well did the Pope deliver his message?—goes a long way to explaining why the Pope's "opinion" is just one more voice added to the cacophony of Oprah, Al Gore, Howard Stern, and the woman in the next cubicle at the office. When the theologians begin to follow the lead of symposiasts Alicia Mosier and Janet E. Smith, i.e., elucidating the instruction of the one person on earth whose charism is infallibility, then we can speak of prophets. Then the already overburdened gatekeeper can go back to feeding Christ's sheep.

Kenneth G. Hodge
Denver, CO

Humanae Vitae was a response to a new social and scientific reality. What is truly remarkable about the document is a prophetic truth associated only with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It was in 1968 that Pope Paul VI released this document, long in preparation, foretelling precisely what would follow the instituting of widespread contraceptive techniques and human choices. In 1999, we are no longer reduced to "guessing" whether he was inspired or speaking only as a man:

- adultery has lost its moral significance and become commonplace;
- chastity has become a symbol of unhealthy development;
- contraception in expectation of fornication is taught to children in the schools;
- respect between the sexes has been replaced by mutual exploitation and/or competition;
- marriage has lost its sacramental nature and its enduring promise;
- statistically, divorce is common, teenage pregnancy is widespread, single parent and serially parented families increase, sexual disease is epidemic, intercourse is recreational, abortion is ubiquitous.

No Old Testament prophet was ever more accurate than Pope Paul VI. The definitive scriptural references on this subject are no longer verses referring to human sexuality, but those that speak of a tree being known by the fruit it produces. The prohibitions of *Humanae Vitae* illustrate the truth so cogently phrased by Ben Franklin: "Vicious actions are not harmful because they are forbidden; they are forbidden because they are harmful."

Dorothy T. Samuel
St. Cloud, MN

All the symposiasts address, in various ways, the meaning of "natural." Perhaps the most cogent expression of the project of modern science is found in Francis Bacon's inelegant injunction that "we must

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put nature to the torture, and make her yield all her secrets." And, to put what some of the symposiasts have noted in Heidegger's terms, man has come to think of nature primarily, if not solely, in terms of "standing reserve." That is, nature is just so much indeterminate "stuff out there" dependent for its determination on the exercise of man's will. But at present nature is not so much "stuff out there" as "stuff in here"—in the hormones, in the brain, in the genome. As Archbishop Charles J. Chaput so directly puts it: "In vitro fertilization, cloning, genetic manipulation, and embryo experimentation are descendants of contraceptive technology." These have worked changes "on our own interior human identity." And of course much more is to come from the boys and girls in the white lab coats.

Whatever one may think of Natural Family Planning, or of periodic restraint under any other name, positive chemico-mechanical restraints on conception—those that, if you will, "violate nature"—open the door to, in C. S. Lewis' well-known words, "the abolition of man." Harkening back to Paul Ramsey's *Fabricated Man*, we must ask: When, where, along the descending arc of reproductive technology, organ transplantation, and genetic engineering will we have produced a "man" made, not begotten, a "creature" for whom it could not be said that Christ died?

John Lyon
Bayfield, WI

There is little question that, on substance, Pope Paul VI was correct in noting what would happen when the "contraceptive mentality" entered a culture's mores.

But once (within marriage) generosity has been fulfilled in a particular couple (which only they can determine in conscience), need "each and every act of sexual intercourse" be open to the gift of children without destroying the symbolism of the conjugal act as complete self-gift to each other? Cannot sterilization of one of the parties in such a relationship make eminent good sense? Since this couple has generously fulfilled one of those ends of marriage (procreative), is it wrong to exclude the other (unitive)?

The abuse of contraception should not prevent us from questioning one small part of the encyclical—not as to its symbolism but as to its use in a particular marriage.

Peter J. Riga
Houston, TX

The one perspective I missed in the symposium (except for the passing dismissal by Harold O. J. Brown of the "population control establishment") was the view of global environmental and ecological thinkers on the subject of contraception. The clichés of overpopulation and environmental destruction retain their power because they are based not only on establishment perceptions but on widely documented evidence. Only recently, the devastation of Hurricane Mitch in Central America was made much more tragic due to the rampant deforestation due to population pressures in those poor lands. The challenge to social conservatives at this point is still to name one social, political, or cultural problem that is not made worse by the pressure of overpopulation.

The Lord told us to "be fruitful and multiply and exercise dominion over the earth." I think that we have long since sufficiently fulfilled the first part of that command and now need to exercise some lordship over our perceived need to populate the world with more and more of our offspring. The Darwinians tell us the chief drive of males is to increase at all costs the number of their genetic replicas. Surely Christian faith need not be captured by that particular dogma. We need not deny our biological heritage and evolutionary urges, but neither do we have to canonize them.

(The Rev.) Wayne D. Walther
Grace Evangelical
Lutheran Church
Lockhart, TX

I thought *Humanae Vitae*'s most pivotal insight was missed by most of the contributors to the symposium. In his encyclical Paul VI moved the Catholic Church away from the traditional natural law arguments (contrary to Harold O. J. Brown's assertion) that were based on an "objective" teleology, i.e., one that emphasizes the *causal link* between sex and procreation (as suggested by J. Budziszewski) or the natural law arguments by design (as asserted by Eric Chevlen).

Humanae Vitae (and subsequent interpretations by John Paul II, especially his theology of the body) has taken Catholics and other people of good will in another direction. The encyclical develops the natural law in regard to the *meaning* of the marital union. It tries to get us to ask: what does the marital union *say*? What does contraception *say*? How does contraception affect what the marital union *says*? *Humanae Vitae* develops the natural law argument based on a "subjective" teleology.

Janet E. Smith gets it right when she says, "Contraception violates both meanings of the conjugal act. It obviously violates the procreative aspect of sex, but it also impedes the union of spouses." *Humanae Vitae* takes a radically new approach to contraception. It emphasizes the *meaning* of what is *said*. It goes beyond the results-oriented, "objective" teleology that has proved insufficient to explain human sexuality. It is able, contrary to the opinions of Sarah E. Hinlicky and R. Albert Mohler, Jr., to establish the immorality of contraception independent of whether the contraceptive method has abortifacient effects.

(The Rev.) John R. Waiss
Tilden Study Center
Los Angeles, CA

I found Sarah E. Hinlicky's contribution to "Contraception: A Symposium" rather surprising in light of her article "Subversive Virginity" (October 1998). Does self-respect require self-control only for the unmarried? And should we demand

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self-control of our boyfriends, but not of our husbands? Ms. Hinlicky justly defends chastity for the unmarried, but fails to recognize that married persons can practice this great virtue as well. The subjugation of lovemaking to human reason within a lawful marriage is precisely what elevates human sexuality above the mating of brute beasts.

As for Ms. Hinlicky's argument that non-abortifacient forms of birth control are not intrinsically evil in light of the fact that many couples employ these methods and suffer no evil results, I can only refer her to the wisdom of Ecclesiasticus 5:4: "Say not: I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me? For the most High is a patient rewarder."

Suzanne N. Temple
Wolfeboro Falls, NH

Sarah E. Hinlicky states that marriage is in the "pattern of His own Trinitarian love." This image quickly fades, however, when Ms. Hinlicky makes contraception an option for spouses. Trinitarian love means perfect self-giving among the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. How can couples using contraception emanate Trinitarian love when they are deliberately withholding their fertility from one another? Only married couples who give themselves completely, including their procreative powers, reflect the unifying and life-giving love of the Trinity.

Bridget E. Maher
Alexandria, VA

"When I was a Protestant I thought like a Protestant, but when I became a Catholic I gave up Protestant ways." "Contraception: A Symposium" reasons, so to speak, like a Protestant; by endeavoring to be ecumenical, it fails to be Catholic. The editors' questions—especially "Was Paul VI right?"—imply that the reader is in a position to judge an article of faith.

As a Lutheran I thought of faith as the centerpiece of my religion: *sola scriptura* with its extra-biblical *simul iustus et peccator*. Though I was largely unaware of it, I held myself up as the final arbiter of that faith; it was up to me to decide ultimately what I as an individual believed. My wife says of her own Calvinist days that faith consisted in trying anxiously to persuade herself that she believed exactly the right list of propositions. As Protestants, we both approached the things of faith as outsiders, examining some idea connected to the faith and making some determination whether or not it was true.

In a Catholic way of thinking, the assent precedes the thought, or the assent, as Augustine says, directs the thought. When I was a college student, a priest informed me that coming to the Catholic faith was an all-or-nothing proposition. I did not like his words. I did not like the thought of giving up control over what I believed. Still, twelve years later I found myself standing before the altar of St. Peter's Cathedral in Scranton, Pa., saying: "I believe everything that the Catholic Church believes, teaches, and proclaims to be revealed by God." Ironically, what I had seen as a barrier to becoming Catholic, and as a legalistic complication of religion, became a doorway to a life much more profound and lovely than I had expected.

In the Church, the Pope's words never stand alone, but belong to the fullness of the deposit of faith, things of beauty and mystery, ours to explore and apprehend with all the other wonders of life in paradise. But for now, as long as we approach any element of the faith as something that we have to determine for ourselves, then at some level we will resist the invitation to embrace it for what it truly is: something better than ourselves.

Glen Johnson
Scranton, PA

To Repent or Not to Repent

Avery Dulles' discussion of Pope John Paul's decision to seek forgiveness for certain actions in the Church's past ("Should the Church Repent?" December 1998) is filled with his usual precision, care, and love for the Church. I would only suggest that the positive benefits with which he concludes his presentation deserve much greater attention than they have thus far received in this debate.

The public acknowledgment by a Pope that certain actions taken in the past by members of the Catholic Church were in error, and caused damage to others which needs to be repented by those members of the Church now living, appears to be largely, if not completely unprecedented. This has led to fears that the Church's ability to proclaim eternally valid truth will be compromised—when in fact the opposite is more likely.

Rather than diminishing the Church's reputation, formally rejecting past errors increases it by demonstrating that the Church has the capacity for self-correction. How can the Church claim to speak for eternally valid truth unless it has some means to correct the errors that its less-than-perfect members inevitably introduce into its life from time to time?

The ecumenical impact of the Pope's initiative is already substantial. The Mennonite-Catholic dialogue, which held its first session in Strasbourg October 14-17, 1998, would probably not have been possible without it, so strongly do twentieth-century Mennonites feel about the persecution of their founders by the Inquisition in the sixteenth century. As the ecumenical movement moves to the truly difficult task of achieving full unity, every Christian community will have to confess painful defects in its past, and surely this initiative by the Bishop of Rome will make it easier for other communions to do likewise.

Ivan J. Kauffman
Washington, D.C.

One does not need prophetic gifts to foresee that repeated *nostrae culpae* on the part of the Catholic Church for sins committed centuries ago will necessarily have the

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effect of paralyzing church authorities, and actually prevent them from fulfilling their duty as teachers of the faithful to condemn the heresies rampant today.

They can anticipate that any condemnation (or even censure) of contemporary erroneous doctrines will trigger a hullabaloo of protests. The Church will be accused of hypocrisy for condemning the Inquisition and—at the same time—reintroducing its evil practices by the back door. Dissenters will say, "Will it again take the Church centuries to see the sins She is committing today?"

Alice von Hildebrand
New Rochelle, NY

Avery Dulles replies:
The dangers pointed out by Alice von Hildebrand are not imaginary, and are to some degree anticipated in my article. But they are outweighed, I believe, by the manifest benefits of an honest acknowledgment of past failures. Ivan Kauffman, from his ecumenical perspective, exhibits the courage and wisdom of Pope John Paul II's proposal for a *nostra culpa.*

Overkill on Abortion?

David Novak accuses Germain Grisez of "overkill" because, in the latest volume of *The Way of the Lord Jesus,* he calls abortion "in some ways . . . even worse" than the racist and political genocides of this century (FT, December 1998). But one such way is evident at a glance: the victims of abortion have long since outnumbered those of all other twentieth-century hecatombs put together.

Another way, weightier from the moral viewpoint, is that executioners in the abortion slaughter vastly outnumber executioners in all those other mass murders combined. This means that politically sanctioned abortion has swept a vastly greater number of persons into grave guilt than other government-sponsored slaughters.

Exploring their guilt, we find it deeper in one crucial regard than that of the tools and thralls of ideologies more manifestly political than abortion. Few of those who carried out the murderous agenda of the German, Soviet, and Chinese dictators were professionals, but the abortion executioners are members of professions betrayed by abortion, poisoned at the root by abortion.

One such profession is medicine, which in fact became a profession only when its practitioners began professing an oath to respect life, among other goods. The other is motherhood, sometimes called the oldest profession but surely a vocation that elevates and engrosses the woman who lives it. Mothers of course need no oath to put the life of their children far, far ahead of their own. Abortion defrauds society of heroism that nature herself bestows liberally on otherwise ordinary human beings. Abortion saps what we might think the only superhuman strength society naturally possesses.

Patrick G. D. Riley
Wauwatosa, WI

David Novak replies:
The point that Patrick G. D. Riley seems to have missed is that there is a fundamental difference between state-sponsored murder and the refusal of a state to fully protect all human life. In the former case, the moral option is to escape the regime, if possible—or, if not, to contribute to its downfall. In the latter case, the moral option is to work with the political and legal structure to correct the sins of omission. Fortunately, the potential for such rectification is still present in all Western democracies.

Truth in Advertising

Although I have the deepest respect for Richard John Neuhaus' intelligence, erudition, and good intentions, I must take issue with his comments on the *New Oxford Review* ad in the November issue of FIRST THINGS (While We're At It, December 1998). His apology for that advertisement is misguided and suggestive of a naiveté I find disconcerting. As a subscriber to both FIRST THINGS and *New Oxford Review,* I make a point of reading the *New Oxford Review* ads because I find them entertaining and enjoy their deliberate outrageousness, as Father Neuhaus obviously does not. Even so, I too was taken aback at first by the statements to which he objects so strenuously—"liberals . . . would love to make every woman a whore" and embrace the goal of "Every gal a slut." However, upon consideration, I decided that this shocking language reflected a reality that needs to be confronted. Father Neuhaus' pained reaction can even be considered a symptom of the disease the *New Oxford Review* is attacking in its ad.

The terms "whore" and "slut" are pejorative terms traditionally used to encourage women to live chastely, if not for love of virtue, then for fear of shame. "Slut" implied a slovenly woman of loose morals. A widow with a milkman who took half an hour to make his delivery was in serious danger of being considered a slut by her neighbors. A "whore" sold her body, and even a woman who lived with a man without the benefit of marriage might be considered a "whore" because she was considered to be selling her body for food and shelter. The point the *New Oxford Review* is making in the ad is that liberals have consistently and successfully pressed for changes in our society that transform conduct that once caused women to be condemned as "whores" and "sluts" into behavior to be accepted and even encouraged as healthy.

Poisonous liberal maxims permeate our culture: "The sexual 'double standard' is unfair" is not an exhortation to men to change their ways. "Women must be free to explore their sexuality" offers women unbounded sexual license. "Traditional Christian sexual morality is puritanical and repressed" implies that healthy people will ignore that morality's dictums. Armed with sex education,

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contraception, and abortion, liberals have encouraged women not only to be "sluts" and "whores," but baby-killers as well.

Surely it must be evident how far our culture has come along the road to total sexual license. Virgins must defend their virginity against accusations of being sexual freaks. The assumption is that healthy adolescents and adults will be sexually active. Homosexuals ask why they should be chaste when no one else is expected to be. These are the fruits of the liberal agenda. People must be free to make their own choices, according to their own lights, and the rest of us are to be understanding and not "judgmental," much less condemnatory. So much so that the very use of the terms "slut" and "whore," even in a hyperbolic advertisement, is "mean-spirited, malicious," and "violative of good taste."

Richard John Neuhaus is free to dislike the *New Oxford Review* ad as a matter of taste. He is free to find it crude, overblown, and unfunny. But to accuse it of being "seriously false" is to fail to come to terms with the very real truth behind its hyperbole and, innocently or not, to pander to liberal sensibilities.

Cherie J. Guelker
Arnold, MO

I hope that your publicly proclaimed distaste for the *New Oxford Review* ad that appeared in the November 1998 issue does not mean that you intend to censor or ban the journal's future ads. I cannot believe that you or anyone else reads these ads as the literal truth about anything in the modern Catholic Church. Your picking out for particular damnation of two sentences from the ad as untrue would imply that all the other sentences were literally true. Is there no place for hyperbole in advertising copy? I was led to subscribe to the *New Oxford Review* by the wit and hyperbole of the ads, which I thought was amusing. I still find them so. Truth through exaggeration is a time-hallowed rhetorical device.

Leland D. Peterson
Norfolk, VA

In Defense of Muriel Spark

The Public Square, my favorite feature in my favorite magazine, cries out for a cultural correction (December 1998). That no one will wonder in thirty or three hundred years what Muriel Spark might have said about anything is a poor forecast. If there is still a remnant of serious readers three hundred years from now, Spark's novels will be read and studied with the same diligence given to the works of her contemporary peers—Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy, et al. Her comment about the Pope ("He's a Pole first, a Pope second, and maybe a Christian third") was self-evidently silly and deserved, at most, a clever correction. But the correction need not have damned her as "a minor celebrity," nor did it deserve such a sweeping generalization based upon a single sentence. Her marvelous fictions are brilliant, witty, intelligent, and profound.

Joseph Schwartz
Milwaukee, WI

Christianity in Japan

Thanks for the brief item on Japan's economy, religion, and culture (While We're at It, November 1998). As an academic specializing in contemporary Japan (law and constitutional politics), and as a member of a partly Christian (Catholic) Japanese family for close to forty years, perhaps I might add a few facts and comments for perspective.

Richard John Neuhaus notes the paucity of Christians despite "missionary endeavors for half a millennium." That might mislead. From about A.D. 1500, the missionary efforts of Jesuits and others were quite successful, but for reasons of international and domestic politics, the Tokugawa dynasty (c. 1600-1868) opted to methodically wipe out Christianity. In modern times, full religious freedom came to Japan only with the 1947 Constitution. The number of Christians remains small, but Christian schools (kindergarten through university) and leaders are disproportionately influential and Christian churches are a well-established part of the present scene. Happily, Christianity is not identified with any one or two social and economic classes. In families with both Christian and Buddhist members, relations are harmonious as long as mutual respect is shown to honor major customs, as at death.

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Too Long in the Ivory Tower?

Perhaps Richard John Neuhaus has been in the New York ivory tower too long and could benefit from a stint in a parish ministry. I was disappointed at the ease with which he dismissed the problem of consumerism in the December 1998 While We're At It. I constantly see people who are struggling under the burden of consumer debt because they have fallen prey to the "evil of consumerism." What a far cry that is from the warnings of Jesus in Matthew 6 regarding treasure in this world vs. treasure in Heaven. The problem is very real, Father Neuhaus. Don't dismiss it too easily.

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THIS TIME

Preachers

James Nuechterlein

It was only when I reached my twenties that I came fully to understand that the center of the liturgy is the Eucharist and not, as I had been led to conclude as a child, the sermon. Even today, when I like to think I have gone well beyond "mere Protestantism," to paraphrase C. S. Lewis, I place more spiritual emphasis on the sermon than is probably good for my soul. In some six decades of churchgoing, I have listened to scores, if not hundreds, of preachers, many of them over extended periods of time. I have heard great preaching, awful preaching, and everything in between—though I am happy to report that on balance I have encountered more good preaching than bad.

In my childhood, it was difficult to distinguish the good preaching from the bad, partly because children do not so much judge sermons as endure them in a pre-critical fashion, partly because the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) pastors of that era all followed a certain formula in preaching that made their sermons sound more or less interchangeable. The staple of LCMS preaching was the three-point sermon: you have sinned and by that sin merited eternal separation from God; Christ died to save you from the consequences of your sins; you should in grateful response strive to live in obedience to God's will.

Points one and three typically received less elaboration than point two. I grew up assuming that all sermons necessarily include a full exposition of our inability to make recompense for sin and of Christ's substitutionary atonement for that sin on the Cross. The emphasis throughout was on a rigorously precise understanding of the gospel as grace alone through faith alone—which, we were given to understand, is what distinguished Lutheran doctrinal purity from sin-obsessed fundamentalism on the one side and works-beguiled Romanism on the other.

As I grew into adolescence, I came to regard good preaching as that which could bring the three-point formula to life. In time, I became impatient with the formula itself—though later still, as I found myself in congregational settings far removed from Missouri Synod certainties, I sometimes looked back on that formula with a certain nostalgia. Better a pat orthodoxy than inventive heresy.

One of the most intelligent, thoughtful, and personally appealing pastors I ever encountered had just one problem as a preacher. Somewhere along in seminary, he had lost his faith, but, for whatever reasons, had became a pastor anyway. Since he could not with integrity preach grace, he preached instead an angry moralism. He specialized in sermons denouncing his congregants' comfortable piety and placid conformity. On one occasion, he announced that only those who were certain they were going to transform their lives should avail themselves of the Eucharist that Sunday. Most of the congregation, instead of reacting with outrage at his denunciations, took perverse pleasure in them. "Thanks, pastor, that's just what we needed to hear," ran the typical response—which, of course, drove him to utter frustration. He finally left the pastorate to go into counseling.

A pastor need not be a heretic to be a bad preacher. Laziness will do. "So tell me pastor," a friend of mine once inquired of a preacher after church, "what did you do with the time you saved from sermon preparation?" Poorly prepared sermons often make for incoherent ones as well. There was one pastor, an occasional substitute preacher at the congregation I then belonged to, who I heard preach just four times, and on each agonizing occasion he entered the pulpit full of confidence and empty of theme or point. The last time, he went on for forty-five minutes—it was not only the worst sermon I ever heard but the longest—blindly in search of a topic or even of consecutive thoughts. As the congregation's stirrings edged toward open mutiny, he groped for an ending. Finally, he hit on the following (which, of course, had nothing to do with anything that had preceded it): "Well, next Tuesday is election day. I don't think I can vote for George Bush. But, then, I don't think I could vote for any Republican. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

The length of that sermon was as unusual as its mindless political conclusion. Few Lutheran pastors today preach more than twenty minutes, a considerable reduction from the twenty-five to thirty-five minutes that was common in my childhood. Many pastors, indeed, are quite careful as to the length of their sermons. My current pastor, for example—whose fine preaching I have noted earlier in these pages—preaches, Sunday after Sunday, precisely eleven-minute sermons. Not ten minutes, not twelve minutes, but eleven. (I know this is so because of my obsessive-compulsive habit of timing sermons—a habit inherited from my father that, try as I might, I cannot shake, even though I'm aware it drives preachers crazy.) Fortunately, the high quality of the sermons at our parish is as predictable as their length.

Good preaching comes, of course, in a variety of styles: long and short, plain and rhetorically elevated, interpretive and narrative. Theological

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sophistication helps, but it is not the critical ingredient. Few beginning pastors, even those with the best seminary education, are excellent preachers. They lack the emotional intelligence, the knowledge of the soul, that develops only with experience of life.

Much of that knowledge comes from suffering, experienced in oneself or apprehended in the suffering of others. It is no accident that two of the most effective preachers I have known were recovering alcoholics. Another outstanding preacher taught me that it is invariably the case that to come to know someone well is to become aware of some fundamental pain or regret in that person's life. Nathaniel Hawthorne, America's most perceptive nineteenth-century author, understood that what essentially binds humanity together—even as, paradoxically, it separates us one from the other—is "the secret of the heart," the often unacknowledged experience of sin and remorse that is our common fate.

The greatest preachers are those whom life has humbled. (I have on more than one occasion felt the effect of an otherwise admirable sermon ruined by the sense that the pastor had been told once too often what a fine preacher he was.) One wants a pastor who knows what it means to pray, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."

Which is not to say that one wants preaching whose primary intention is to heal wounded psyches or offer assurance that things will, after all, turn out all right. Good preaching engages, in Lutheran terms, the dialectical conversation of sin and grace. "Preach grace!" is the necessary imperative addressed to all who enter the pulpit, but grace without sin dissolves into Hallmark theology. The essence of our fault—our own most grievous fault—is that we are, as Augustine noted, turned in on ourselves. Good preaching directs us out of our crippling self-preoccupation and toward the promises of the gospel. It is from there that injunctions to live well can persuasively begin.

For all preachers, even the very best, there are moments when inspiration fails. On those occasions, they could do worse than consider artful variations on the traditional three-point sermon. I remember, from many years ago, the farewell sermon of an LCMS pastor of the old school. His pastoral career, he acknowledged, had been a modest one, but he wanted us to know that he left the pulpit with a sense of satisfaction. "I have always," he said, "preached Christ crucified." That was all, and that was enough. F1

Bedtime and Weekly

Our toddler slices the air
with a bandaged finger,
her makeshift cross
more complete
by her young, scratched skin,
a reminder of all our "boo-boo's"
piling up in the flesh
till we cry out
our alphabet beginnings,
Abba gurgling in the throat
we hold up weekly
for the bread and wine

that settles nightly
in our wounded souls,
cradles to sleep those childish
doubts now grown-up
in our bodies,
so immature and mortal
and hungry for the calm
clean milk of continuous
childlike prayer.

Marjorie Maddox

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Opinion

The Mozart Effect

Michael Linton

It can cure backache. And asthma. And obesity, writer's block, alcoholism, schizophrenia, prejudice, heart disease, drug addiction, headaches, and AIDS. It makes bread rise better and improves the taste of beer. It can even make you smarter—so smart that in Florida it's now the law that all child-care facilities receiving state aid include at least half an hour of it every day. The governors of both Tennessee and Georgia give newborns in their states examples of it along with cards reminding their parents of their tykes' immunization needs. At a community college in New York, administrators have set aside a room in their library for it. Across the nation, professional educators pelt school boards with demands for its inclusion in the curriculum. An Indiana obstetrician even markets a device that administers it in utero.

What is this philosopher's stone that can so dramatically change the world? It's music. Or better, Mozart's music, or so says Don Campbell in his best-selling *The Mozart Effect: Tapping the Power of Music to Heal the Body, Strengthen the Mind, and Unlock the Creative Spirit* (Avon Books, 1997). In high demand as a speaker, Campbell addresses a different conference almost weekly, hopscotching across the nation from his base in Boulder, Colorado. Trademarking the name "Mozart Effect," Campbell has even gone cable with infomercials for his book and its accompanying compact discs and cassettes. In the great tradition of P. T. Barnum and the "Veg-O-Matic," Mozart has now hit the mainstream of American life.

The impetus for this remarkable turn of events was a modest letter by Frances Rauscher, Gordon Shaw, and Katherine Ky published under "scientific correspondence" in the October 14, 1993 issue of *Nature*. In their barely three-column report, these University of California at Irvine researchers summarized the findings of an experiment conducted upon thirty-six UCI students. After ten minutes spent either listening to Mozart's *Sonata in D major for Two Pianos*, K488, to a "relaxation tape," or simply sitting in silence, the students were given a paper folding and cutting test. (A piece of paper is folded over several times and then cut. You have to mentally unfold it and choose the right shape from five examples.) The students who listened to the Mozart sonata showed a 8-9 point increase in their IQ scores over their scores when they took the test after either a period of silence or listening to the relaxation tape. The bump in IQ was temporary, not lasting beyond the time required to sit through the experiment.

The researchers were testing the suspicion that there might be a kind of "music box" analogous to Chomsky's famous yet-undiscovered "language box." Might the symmetries and patterns characteristic of music be fundamentally connected to the symmetries and patterns researchers were tracking in brain waves? If so, might not music really be tapping into a structure inherent in the brain itself? And if this were true, ultimately might music be a kind of fundamental, or pre-linguistic—or even supra-linguistic—speech? The researchers tested Mozart's music because they thought that if anyone was "tapping into this inherent structure for patterns," it was Mozart. Who else was composing music so early and so well?

Although the researchers were professionally circumspect with their conclusions, the media that reported them were not. The story that "Mozart makes you smarter" made network news, and the wire services carried it to newspapers and magazines across the country. The Mozart Effect was born, and began its trek from the lab to the publishing house to the legislature.

Well, not born really. Reincarnated, let's say. And it wasn't so much a trek as a march along a well-worn path. The notion that music has properties and powers that can sharpen the mind and transform the soul is ancient. Such ideas formed the basis of Confucian civilization in China. In the West, they are attributed to Pythagoras and his followers and played a central role in Plato's ideal state.

Greek intellectuals generally had little patience with the gods of mythology, preferring to view the world in more abstract ways. At an early date, they observed that the basic condition of their world was change (we grow old, rivers flow, winter becomes spring, etc.), and reasonably concluded that if so, the basic condition of divinity (or otherworldliness) would be the opposite of it—or changelessness. This changelessness they considered perfection. Such divine perfection they couldn't see in the world around them, but they could observe it in the stars, in arithmetic, and in geometry. They credited Pythagoras with discovering that such divinity could also be encountered in music.

Pythagoras argued that music was divine because it was constructed of musical intervals that could be defined by mathematical ratios. Take a string and pluck it and you get a note. Divide it exactly in half, pluck it, and you get the same pitch an octave above it. Take that same string, divide it in thirds, hold

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down that string at a point two-thirds along its length, pluck the longer side, and you get a pitch a perfect fifth above the note you get plucking the whole string undampened. In a similar way each interval can be described by number. The octave by 2:1. The fifth by 3:2. The fourth by 4:3. The major second by 9:8. The major third by 81:64. And so on and so forth, every interval being described by an unchanging ratio. Because one, two, three, and four added together equal the Pythagorean perfect number ten, the intervals defined by these numbers are themselves also perfect (which is why we still refer to the octave, fourth, and fifth as the "perfect").

The Pythagoreans believed that number was the core to the universe and that because numbers do not change they were of divine origin. Since musical intervals were an expression of number, they too were divine. But the Pythagoreans themselves had little or no use for real music—that is if by "music" we mean musical compositions, or actual musicians for that matter. At least according to Aristides Quintilianus, an early Pythagorean, listening to actual music just got in the way. Best just to stick to thinking about the ratios.

In spite of this warning, tales developed of music's supernatural abilities. Orpheus charms Hades by his singing. Terpender of Methymna is credited with calming a revolt by his music. The mighty Alexander the Great is driven to murder—and remorse—by the playing of a servant. Even David's soothing of Saul's rages is probably rooted in a notion of music's supernatural nature being able to restore equilibrium. But no one makes music more central to his thought than does Plato. In the *Timeaus*' creation myth, he makes music the essential stuff of the cosmos. In *The Republic*, Plato develops it into the notion of the "doctrine of ethos."

Plato's purpose in writing *The Republic* is to describe the ideal state. Since an ideal state cannot be made up of un-ideal people, a good deal of his discussion concerns how to educate boys into the kind of men who would lead such a society. Briefly put, he thinks that this could best be accomplished by stressing two things in elementary education: gymnastics and music. The ways in which gymnastics would train the body are pretty clear; similarly, music was supposed to mold the spirit.

Plato held that music does not merely depict qualities and emotional states but embodies them (this is the "doctrine of ethos"). A performer singing about the rage of Achilles, for instance, would not only be depicting the emotional states of anger and violence and the personal qualities of Homer's hero but would be experiencing those things himself. And not only the performer—so too would the listeners. Plato believed that music encodes ethical qualities already found in human conduct and that music feeds those qualities back into the soul of the performer and his listeners. Thus certain sorts of music would educate boys into living highly ethical lives while other sorts could educate them into baseness.

Plato forbids music in the Mixolydian and intense Lydian modes for his boys (they are "useless even for women if they are to be decent") as well as the music in the Ionian and lax Lydian modes (which are "soft, lazy, and fit for drunkenness"). Boys should be allowed to hear music only in the Dorian and Phrygian modes. In this way they might imitate the actions of a brave man "defending himself against fortune steadily with endurance."

Plato's ideal state was never established in antiquity. But his musical ideas weren't forgotten. In 1570, as France was being torn by the wars of religion, Charles IX's Catholic intelligentsia prodded him into creating the Académie de Poésie et de Musique. In the *lettres patents* which created the academy, the king declared that "it is of great importance for the morals of the citizens of a town that the music current in the country should be kept under certain laws, all the more so because men conform themselves to music and regulate their behavior accordingly, so that whenever music is disordered, morals are also depraved, and whenever it is well ordered, men are well tutored."

It was the king's hope that proper music-making would restore order to his land, ending the bloodshed between Catholic and Protestant, or, if not ending it, at least making the Protestants take their humiliations a little more quietly. Here we have the "Mozart effect" roughly two hundred years before Mozart's birth.

Problem is, it didn't work. French Protestants and Catholics did not lay down their arms and embrace each other upon hearing the strain of fifes playing music in the Dorian mode. Plato's educational theories—on this point at least—are sheer nonsense. Do we really believe that training in ballet (which is really the union of gymnastics and music that Plato is talking about) is the best preparation for politics? Should Winston Churchill have spent more time in a tutu? The idea that requiring boys to listen to music in a particular mode will make them act with courage is perhaps the stupidest notion a great mind has ever come up with. Play whatever music you like for them—boys will be boys. And Pythagoras was wrong. The perfect fifth is not the temporal manifestation of supra-cosmic divinity sent to illuminate the land with transcendence. Moses did not come down the mountain with a tuning fork (nor, for that matter, did Muhammad or Jesus or Joseph Smith).

And the "Mozart Effect" is no effect at all. Soon after the original Irvine project, researchers at the University of Auckland tried to replicate Rauscher's results. They were unsuccessful, and concluded that listening to Mozart had no effect upon short-term IQ. Although Rauscher has replicated her original find-

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ings in a subsequent project, the conflicts between the studies have yet to be resolved. In any case, the parameters of the study weaken under scrutiny. Did the students really listen to the Mozart, or were they just in the room while the music was going on? Did the students who listened with care—in other words, listened to the music as it is supposed to be listened to (following the change of themes, the modulations, noting the surprise deceptive cadence near the close)—perform differently than those who just sat back and let the music wash over them?

The researchers seemed surprisingly unaware of the music itself. When they suggested parameters for further investigation, they hypothesized that "[music] which is repetitive may interfere with, rather than enhance, abstract reasoning." Yet the movements of the sonata they selected are themselves highly repetitive. And the choice of work is regrettable, since the second movement is probably one of the silliest things Mozart ever wrote. The very best thing that could be said of their experiment—were it completely uncontested—would be that listening to bad Mozart enhances short-term IQ.

Prof. Rauscher has since joined the faculty of the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, where she is now studying the effects of music upon rodents. While her and her colleagues' findings remain controversial, these folks are insightful scientists and did not exaggerate their findings. Don Campbell knows no similar inhibitions. Using Rauscher's research as his base, Campbell has legally laid claim to The Mozart Effect™ and launched a commercial enterprise independent of the scientists whose curiosity initiated the investigation.

The claims that Campbell makes for music are of an almost rococo flamboyance. And like the rococo, just about as substantive. The ailments that head this article are part of a list of nearly fifty problems Campbell suggests that music corrects. His evidence is usually anecdotal, and even this he misinterprets. Some things he gets completely wrong. For instance, Campbell cites Georgie Stehli's famous cure from autism as an example of music's therapeutic effects. But in her autism, music, and indeed almost all sound, was a source of tremendous pain to little Georgie, not comfort. Her therapy was successful because it desensitized her to sound.

And the whole structure of his argument collapses under simple common sense. If Mozart's music were able to improve health, why was Mozart himself so frequently sick? If listening to Mozart's music increases intelligence and encourages spirituality, why aren't the world's smartest and most spiritual people Mozart specialists? According to the argument in Campbell's book, the world's intellectual and spiritual center, populated with our civilization's most generous and healthful beings, ought to be where Mozart is most revered, studied, and performed; in other words, some place like the Metropolitan Opera's canteen during the intermission of *Così fan tutte*. It isn't.

The world's greatest orchestras have a good number of people in them who passionately hate each other. (The principal oboe and flute of one of our major orchestras so detested each other that no one remembered a time when they spoke.) And far from being healthy, orchestral musicians are beset by ailments. Carpal-tunnel syndrome, back problems, high blood pressure, exhaustion, diabetes, depression; look down from the balcony on the orchestra and you're looking on a group of men and women poised on the brink of physical collapse.

Music academics are no better. The annual meeting of the American Musicological Society is full of displays of one-upmanship, conceit, and subtle and not-so-subtle public back-stabbing and professional murder. And our greatest musicians, the star virtuosi, are more than infrequently notorious for their cruelty, faithlessness, arrogance, selfishness, and stupidity. And in all of these areas, Mozart's music only makes matters worse. His work is so technically demanding and his textures so lean that little less than a perfect performance will do. Almost any musician would prefer the gymnastics of Rachmaninoff to the delicacy of Mozart since with Mozart you always perform without a net.

In short, musicians—the ones who know Mozart best—are cantankerous, egotistical, selfish, stupid, cowardly, generous, even-tempered, compassionate, intelligent, humble, and kind in about the same proportion as Teamsters—who, for the most part, hardly know any Mozart at all.

Music can do many things. A work song can coordinate physical labor. A march can keep an army in step. A bugle call can signal retreat and a melodic phrase can assist in the memorization of Torah. And art music, or that music which is intended to be primarily listened to for its aesthetic content, can be a powerful means for emotional self-reflection, self-illumination, and expression. But the one thing that music most certainly cannot do is overcome the will.

Music is not a drug that incapacitates the listener and produces a predictable result. A whole lifetime spent listening to Bach will not automatically make a woman love God. And—despite the warning of two generations of moralists—a lifetime listening to the Rolling Stones will not make a man fornicate. Particular kinds of music may express things that appeal to the listener, and the listener may select a particular kind of music because he finds that it resonates with his own—pre-musical—emotional condition, but the music itself can never cause the listener to act. Action is a function always of the will, and while music may prod, and it may suggest, it cannot force. We

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must indeed pay the piper, but we always choose the tune and decide whether or not to dance.

Poor Mozart. Where is he in all of this? Lost. Mozart's magnificent dances, the terrifying thunder of *Don Giovanni*, the bliss of *The Magic Flute*, the harmonic intricacies of his symphonies, and the transcendence of the final works: the "Ave verum corpus," *La Clemenza di Tito*, and the Requiem—all of this is lost in the rabble of Campbell's traveling snake-oil show barker's sales pitch. Mozart's greatest music isn't about being intelligent, or acquiring power. It's about becoming a human being and living, as he signed his scores, *in nomine Domini*. That is what the Mozart effect is supposed to be.

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Daddy's Little Girl

Wendy Shalit

What went wrong with Alice Walker's new book, her first novel in six years? *By the Light of My Father's Smile* (Random House) should have been well-received by our literary elite. For one thing, it celebrates liberated female sexuality, especially lesbian sexuality. And it is multiracial to boot, taking place among the Mundo, a new-sprung tribe created when escaped black slaves commingled with native Indians in the Sierras.

Yet it wasn't well-received, to say the least. Francine Prose wrote in the *New York Times Book Review* that Walker's book was "deeply mired in New Age hocus-pocus and goddess religion baloney. . . . What's so dismaying, finally, about *By the Light of My Father's Smile* is Alice Walker's apparent assumption that her only job is to serve as a cheerleader for Eros, to exhort her audience to love and respect their bodies." Richard Bernstein was even more devastating, declaring that "Ms. Walker seems to have substituted the heartfelt concerns that motivated *The Color Purple* for a mediocre sort of spiritualist philosophizing that is both cloying and predictable."

Yet, there are bookshelves full of mediocre spiritualist philosophies out there, and it doesn't usually bother our intellectuals this much. Alice Walker's flounder must have been something worse than mere predictability.

Walker is, of course, the author of *The Color Purple*, which won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award in 1983. At first, *By the Light of My Father's Smile* seems vintage Walker. A husband-and-wife team of Christian missionaries live among the Mundo people. The father, being "sucked into the black cloth" of Christianity, feels threatened by the Mundos' free and easy ways. Years earlier, as Walker reminds us, the nakedness of the native tribes drove "the sexually repressed Europeans to heights of cruelty as they vainly sought to deny their lust." And so it is with the father of this story. The confusing narrative divagates through several different voices, but the central event of the book, to which all voices vertiginously return, is the father beating his adolescent daughter Magdalena for carrying on with a young Mundo boy.

But instead of controlling her, guess what ends up happening? That's right, he succeeds only in alienating himself from her all the more. Her younger sister, Susannah, takes her side and both decide that their father is hopelessly gauche. For most of the book Susannah and Magdalena's father also happens to be dead, but happily this doesn't interfere with the story in the slightest, since it turns out that he has become a sort of angel who can peer at his daughters from above. Hung-up Dad is contrite now, being dead and all, and naturally he wants to make amends for failing to appreciate his daughters' sexuality when he was alive.

One of the first scenes in *By the Light of My Father's Smile* depicts the lovemaking of Susannah and her partner, Pauline, all reported in excruciating detail by our recently deceased and formerly repressed father. The book is generously sprinkled with such lines as, "She permits my daughter free-roaming access to her heavy breasts, hot to the touch" and "The woman rolls over and is suddenly the aggressor, on top of my daughter, straddling her. My daughter has wanted this. . . ." Later, he is glad to see his daughter's lover resting "on her knees, her hand busy between my daughter's legs . . . in truth, she can barely believe she has restrained herself for so long, and denied herself the taste of my daughter's [the rest is censored]." And these are the tamer passages.

The problem here is not necessarily the explicitness, but something much more fundamental. There are many acceptable voices with which to narrate a woman's discovery of sex; the voice of the woman's dead father hovering over her while she is doing it, though, is generally not the one that immediately springs to mind. For a very good reason.

It is odd that Walker, who writes so much about sexual abuse of women, should be so insensitive to the incest taboo in *By the Light of My Father's Smile*. Just what exactly is Walker's father supposed to be smiling about, anyway? It's decidedly unerotic, not to mention creepy, to have a father closely observing and cheerfully "celebrating" his daughter's sexuality in such detail.

And it gets worse. Later, whenever the daughters

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hesitate in matters sexual, their father is there to beg them for more entertainment. For instance, "Susannah is writing a novel that explores the relationship she had with a man after her marriage to the Greek. But she is having difficulties. She cannot write in any sex. *Write it in,* I screech from the celestial sidelines. *Put the sex right on up in there!* Even if it's nothing but the copulating dogs you saw from your window as a five-year-old when we lived in Mexico. . . . Or think [of when] your lover . . . shocked and stirred you and entered [censored]. It is not so big a deal! I want her to know. . . ."

If you want a nonfiction account of what happens when fathers encourage daughters to get "in touch" with their sexuality because "it is not so big a deal," read *Hustled: My Journey From Fear to Faith* (Westminster/John Knox), Tonya Flynt-Vega's sad tale of what it was like growing up as Larry Flynt's daughter. Flynt was extremely interested in introducing his daughter—now thirty-three—to the pornographic wonders depicted in his magazine, *Hustler*, and to that end molested her on several occasions when she was young. Needless to say, she did not thrive as a result. Larry Flynt and Alice Walker both want to smooth over our taboos, the better to display—as Walker puts it in her flap copy—"a celebration of sexuality." So why, one might ask, should the incest taboo be any exception?

The artistic failure of *By the Light of My Father's Smile* proves that we need these taboos in order for sex to be interesting. Walker advocates a sexuality purged of every last human convention, but humans tend to find it hard to relate to a narrative so devoid of anything like shame, dignity, or even privacy. As one reader posted on the on-line bookstore, Amazon.com, "Ms. Walker is truly one of the most daring writers of the twentieth century . . . [but] I found the details of the lesbian lovemaking to be more than I ever wanted to know about lesbian relationships—and the assumption that my dead relatives spy on me in my bed quite revolting. The story was unique but never 'captured' me."

So maybe morality has a place in discussions of art, after all. It is interesting to note that when a literary conceit is as tasteless as the one in *By the Light of My Father's Smile,* it is difficult to attain the suspension of disbelief necessary to lose oneself in the story. On a purely aesthetic level, it just doesn't "capture." Contrast this with Nabokov: Even if he did claim that "aesthetic bliss" was his only goal, he was a great writer precisely because he was able to convey all the ambivalence and guilt humans usually feel when they do something morally questionable. At the end of *Lolita,* Humbert Humbert hears the laughter of children playing and says, "Then I knew that the hopelessly poignant thing was not Lolita's absence from my side, but the absence of her voice from that concord"—that is, her absence from the world of children. He knows that he plotted for that absence, sees that what he stole from her can never be regained, and at last is sickened by it. With Alice Walker, there is never any such ambivalence. It is always, the more orgasms, the merrier. Is anyone actually like this in real life—other than, perhaps, Larry Flynt?

Alice Walker's blunder is interesting because it marks a kind of end point in the swinging of our cultural pendulum. We have now thoroughly tasted the taboo-less waters, and boy, are they boring.

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The Future of the End of Democracy

J. Budziszewski

If you want to know why the United States is in a constitutional crisis, a good place to begin thinking about it is the series of outrages perpetrated by the 1992 Supreme Court decision *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which upheld the outcome, though not the reasoning, of the infamous abortion decision *Roe v. Wade* (1973).

The first atrocity was that the *Casey* Court reaffirmed what it would seem that no government can affirm without undermining the grounds of its own authority: a private right to use lethal violence for any reasons whatsoever against an unprotected class of persons.

The second was that the Court upheld *Roe* even while admitting that it may have been decided unconstitutionally. "[W]e are satisfied," say the jurists, "that the immediate question is not the soundness of *Roe*'s resolution of the issue, but the precedential force that must be accorded the ruling." In effect this statement sets the Court itself in the place of the Constitution, and it seems that the Justices intend no less, for they declare explicitly that "the rule of law" depends on citizens accepting their decisions.

The third was that the Court unilaterally established a religion, something the Constitution explicitly forbids: the religion of radical selfism. By contrast with the Founders, who pledged themselves to the laws of nature and of nature's God, they announce a "right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." Unborn children may be killed, it seems, because each person decides for himself which rules have "meaning" and who counts as "human."

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In such a polity no one can long be safe. Indeed, the wonder of it all is how one thing leads to another. Having declared that the Constitution somehow includes a right to define reality, the judges *must* put themselves in its place: if he wishes to survive, any king who says "Everything is permitted" must add "But I decide for everyone what 'everything' includes." To take a longer view of the matter, in order to justify violating the natural law against killing, the Court has at last found it necessary to defy the principle of our own republican government (the balance of powers), the principle of all republican government (that the weak have equal standing with the strong), and the principle of government as such (that rule is ordained to protect, not destroy).

As time has passed, several lower courts have followed the logic of the *Casey* "mystery passage" to conclusions even more murderous than its authors are yet willing to approve, involving euthanasia and assisted suicide, and in the meantime the Court has shown greater and greater readiness to assert itself against all attempts to clip its wings. It was against this background that in November 1996 an intellectual journal with a reputation for sobriety decided to do something. FIRST THINGS published a symposium entitled (please note the question mark) "The End of Democracy?"

Substantive evils like abortion had been criticized in FIRST THINGS before. So had the procedural evil whereby all of the important decisions about how to live are preempted by usurping courts. Various remedies, such as constitutional amendment and Article III legislation, had often been mooted, and the violent fringe had been firmly rejected. So how was the symposium new? For good or for ill, what distinguished it was its willingness to raise the question "whether we have reached or are reaching the point where conscientious citizens can no longer give moral assent to the existing regime" and to consider, without endorsement, the rights and wrongs of re-

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sponses "ranging from noncompliance to resistance to civil disobedience to morally justified revolution."

In view of the controversy that followed, I think it is important to measure the tone of some of the most widely quoted passages from the introduction by the FIRST THINGS editors. Indeed many critics appear to have drawn their swords without reading further.

> Perhaps the United States, for so long the primary bearer of the democratic idea, has itself betrayed the idea and become something else.
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> [The Founders] had no illusions that the people would always decide rightly. . . . But always the principle was clear: legitimate government is government by the consent of the governed. The Founders called this order an experiment, and it is in the nature of experiments that they can fail. . . . The proposition advanced in the following essays is this: The government of the United States of America no longer governs by the consent of the people.
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> The courts have not, and perhaps cannot, restrain themselves, and it may be that in the present regime no other effective restraints are available. If so, we are witnessing the end of democracy.
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> Among the most elementary principles of Western Civilization is the truth that laws which violate the moral law are null and void and must in conscience be disobeyed.
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> America is not and, please God, will never become Nazi Germany, but it is only blind hubris that denies it can happen here and, in peculiarly American ways, may be happening here.
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> What is happening now is a growing alienation of millions of Americans from a government they do not recognize as theirs; what is happening now is an erosion of moral adherence to this political system. . . . What is happening now is the displacement of a constitutional order by a regime that does not have, will not obtain, and cannot command the consent of the people.
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> "God and country" is a motto that has in the past come easily, some would say too easily, to almost all Americans. What are the cultural and political consequences when many more Americans, perhaps even a majority, come to the conclusion that the question is "God *or* country"?

Although the editors anticipated charges of irresponsibility, provocation, and alarmism—defending themselves with the reminder that "it is the Supreme Court that has raised the question of the legitimacy of its law"—they were clearly unprepared for the hurricane of criticism that followed. Rubbing salt in the wound is that many of the critics had been close allies. While FIRST THINGS had viewed itself as pushing its good friends a little further in the direction to which they were already logically committed by their premises, not all who felt the push thought it so little or so friendly. Two distinguished neoconservatives, Gertrude Himmelfarb and Peter L. Berger, resigned from the Editorial Board. Walter Berns, whose connection with the journal had been more rarified, resigned from the Editorial Advisory Board. *Commentary* sponsored a symposium just to respond to the FIRST THINGS symposium. But the readership held firm, the many defenders of the symposium were as spirited as the critics, and the editors took comfort in the fact that what had opened with a quarrel might continue as a conversation.

Greater attention is due the criticisms from those whom the symposiasts (Richard John Neuhaus, Robert H. Bork, Russell Hittinger, Hadley Arkes, Charles N. Colson, and Robert P. George) had counted among their allies. Most of these reproaches are explicit, but a few must be teased out from between the lines.

First, the symposiasts are said to lack a properly conservative disposition. Their shortsightedness is said to make them ignore the great strides their cause has already made,[1] their radicalism to threaten the political alliances by which these gains have been won,[2] and their absolutism to poison the negotiation and compromise on which their future gains depend.[3] Moreover, critics allege that their pessimism discourages people from seeking political remedies for political problems,[4] their shallowness encourages

[1]Gertrude Himmelfarb: "In these few years, we have begun to think the unthinkable. . . . We have even begun to do the undoable." "On the Future of Conservatism: A Symposium," *Commentary*, February 1997 (hereafter *Future*), pp. 29-32.

[2]William Kristol: "Creating . . . a majority is the radical task before us. The problem with the FIRST THINGS symposium is that its 'radicalizing mood' distracts from this truly radical task." *Future*, pp. 32-33.

[3]Peter L. Berger: "The conservative mandate on the 'values' issue is to spell out an authentically conservative position without falling into a radicalizing mood that proposes nonnegotiable absolutes." *Future*, pp. 17-19.

[4]William J. Bennett: "My problem with declaring the American 'regime' illegitimate is that it assumes that because of the actions of an out-of-control Court, America has become (or is about to become) a nation that is irredeemably antidemocratic, that we have exhausted all our options, that we are powerless to rein in the Court. That is simply not so." "The End of Democracy? A Discussion Continued," FIRST THINGS, January 1997 (hereafter *Discussion*), pp. 19-21.

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them to seek political remedies even though the problems are really cultural,[5] and their intemperance eggs on crazies who would emulate the violence of the foe.[6] Besides, some add, the comparisons which the symposiasts offer are not only undiscriminating but offensive: Usurping judges are not like Nazis,[7] and abortion is not like the Holocaust.[8]

Second, critics maintain that although the judicial usurpation of legislative power is both deep and disturbing, there is something inappropriate about the manner in which the symposiasts frame their complaints. To some these complaints seem overheated, because usurpations by one branch or another are a pervasive fact of political life.[9] To some they seem hypocritical, because the real gripe of the symposiasts is supposed to be not who legalized abortion but the sheer fact that it was legalized.[10] Some even hint that they are futile because the American people have passively consented to what their courts have done.[11]

Next are objections to the extraconstitutional forms of resistance which some of the symposiasts consider. The critics do not charge that resistance can *never* be justified, but that constitutional democracy makes it problematic. Some make the point that under constitutional democracy, the laws merely reflect what the people want.[12] Others remark that the democratic opportunities for changing a law are never finished.[13] A final rebuke is that the proponents of civil disobedience have somehow overlooked the fact that the laws which they protest are literally impossible to disobey: they do not command evil, but merely permit it.[14]

Finally, some critics are troubled by the religious views by which most of the symposiasts are moved. A few critics maintain that religion and religious morality do not belong in the public square at all; the genius of our constitutional system, they say, is that passions are defused by the relegation of all such things to the private realm.[15] Most critics concede religion a place, but not the place the symposiasts want it to have. Just what place they think that is, or what place they propose themselves, is by no means clear. Perhaps the idea is that religion may be invoked in debate about particular laws, but not in reference to the constitutional framework within which such debate is held. Or perhaps the point is that religion may be invoked generically, but never in "sectarian" terms.[16] Whether or not these views are precisely the ones the critics have in mind, they

[5]Midge Decter: "What we are dealing with is, in short, a cultural, rather than primarily a judicial, problem." *Discussion*, p. 21.

[6]Norman Podhoretz: "I am appalled . . . by the seditious measures you contemplate and all but advocate; and by the aid and comfort you for all practical purposes offer to the bomb-throwers among us." *Future*, pp. 35-37, quoting from a letter from Podhoretz to Richard John Neuhaus.

[7]Midge Decter: "Could you not see, in the twentieth of all centuries, how profoundly offensive it is to speak this way when even the truly morally justified revolutions of our time—against Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and their acolytes and imitators—never, alas, took place?" *Discussion*, p. 21.

[8]Peter L. Berger: "It is only with great difficulty that I can entertain the idea that abortion is an 'icon of absolute evil' to be placed alongside the Holocaust. Indeed, that idea, even if taken as a theoretical exercise, strikes me as, precisely, a 'moral enormity.'" *Future*, pp. 17-19.

[9]Peter L. Berger: "A key concern of FIRST THINGS is a usurpation of power by the courts. . . . But is this enough reason to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the system? The American separation of powers has always been a creaky affair." *Future*, pp. 17-19.

[10]Peter L. Berger: "Imagine that abortion in the United States had achieved its present legal status through an act of Congress [and] the Supreme Court had then ruled this act to be unconstitutional. I doubt very much that most of the FIRST THINGS contributors would have viewed the latter action as a serious usurpation of power, let alone a reason to question the legitimacy of the American polity." Compare Gertrude Himmelfarb: "But what if the legalization of abortion were the product not of the judiciary but of the legislature—if it betokened not the 'end of democracy' but the very exercise of democracy? This is, in fact, the case in most Western countries. . . . Does this mean that all these regimes . . . are also in violation of the moral law and hence illegitimate?" *Future*, pp. 17-19.

[11]Though Stanley Hauerwas remains more ally than critic, his comment illustrates the point: "The problem isn't the courts. The problem is the American people! The conservatives don't want to admit that this is what the American people want! They *want* assisted suicide! They believe in autonomy!" Quoted in Richard John Neuhaus, "The Anatomy of a Controversy," *The End of Democracy? The Judicial Usurpation of Politics* (Spence, 1997), p. 213.

[12]Gertrude Himmelfarb: "If conservatives do take democracy and the Constitution seriously, if we are truly exercised by the usurpation of judicial power, we must also be prepared for the possibility that vox populi might differ from many of us on the subject of abortion." *Future*, pp. 29-32.

[13]The editors of *National Review*: "[D]emocracy provides legal avenues of protest and reform which remove the justification for resistance to specific unjust laws—or at least shrink it to the level of conscientious objection and modest civil disobedience (which, to be sure, is all that Professor Hittinger et al. are claiming). . . . Because a democracy never finally makes up its mind but allows infinite debate, it cannot be said to have embraced a crime or entrenched a sin." "First Things First," *National Review*, November 11, 1996, pp. 16, 18.

[14]Samuel Francis: "[N]o one is commanded to have or perform an abortion or to suffer or perform euthanasia. The laws to which the symposiasts object are permissive, not compulsive, and how one might 'resist' such permissive laws is never clear." "First Things Last," *Chronicles*, March 1997, pp. 32-34.

[15]Walter Berns: "It is the Constitution, the product of [the American] Revolution, and not a recondite 'moral law,' that the President swears to 'protect and defend,' the members of Congress to 'support,' and the judges to 'support and defend.' . . . [T]he Constitution . . . consign[s] religion to the private sphere." *Future*, pp. 19-21.

[16]Perhaps this is what Gertrude Himmelfarb meant: "This is not, it seems to me, a proper mode of political discourse, still less of conservative political discourse. Indeed it discredits, or at the very least makes suspect, any attempt by conservatives to introduce moral and religious considerations into 'the public square'—as if morality and religion necessarily lead to such apocalyptic political conclusions." *Future*, pp. 17-19.

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are widely held in the culture.

Were the symposiasts really so intemperate and radical? In some instances the critics seem to have misunderstood their language; in others they seem to have understood it perfectly well but rejected it. Some of the misunderstandings are downright silly. For example, a surprising number of critics complained that America is not a "regime," taking that expression as a snotty nineties equivalent of the sixties slam "Amerika." The problem here is merely that the symposiasts were writing in Academic dialect while their critics were reading in Trade Media. Since everyone on both sides of the dispute is bilingual, it's hard to see why there should have been any confusion.

The genuine disagreements are more difficult to deal with, although they become somewhat manageable once disentangled from the agreements. Because neither side thinks that our *present* circumstances justify anything like insurrection, the critics ask "How could you think of bringing it up?" Because both sides can imagine circumstances *becoming* so bad that some kind of resistance would be justified, the symposiasts ask "Why won't you let us worry out loud?" As I read the state of the conversation, a tacit agreement has been reached not to say much about extreme responses which no one thinks are yet upon us. A gap remains about whether civil disobedience is ripe for discussion; we will return to this problem.

Have the symposiasts ignored the strides their cause has already made and endangered the political alliances that achieved them? When Gertrude Himmelfarb says conservatives have begun to think the unthinkable and do the undoable she is speaking of past and future reforms in the realms of welfare, Medicare, and Social Security. Yet even she admits that in the realms the symposiasts care about most deeply, "the situation may be getting worse rather than better." This suggests that the "conservative" coalition has been better for some kinds of social and cultural activists than for others, and it hardly seems immoderate to ask that its terms be renegotiated. From one point of view that is all the symposiasts were doing. As to the charges that they discouraged people from seeking political remedies for political problems and encouraged them to seek political remedies to cultural problems, it seems pretty clear that there is no "either-or." Both political activism and cultural persuasion are necessary, and neither endeavor can get far without the other. That seems to be a point on which both sides can agree, so the next stage of the conversation should be how to coordinate the two endeavors.

The charge of absolutism involves a different kind of disagreement. Both the symposiasts and their critics think abortion and euthanasia are wrong; both are willing to oppose them; and both support halfway measures like prohibiting partial-birth or third-trimester abortions. So what's the problem? The problem is that *how* wrong it is to take innocent human life is not just an academic question; it determines strategy.

If abortion and euthanasia are bad only in the way that budget deficits are bad, then we should strike a "win some, lose some" pose and be willing to make lots of tradeoffs between saving human lives and our many other goals. But if they are bad in the way that stuffing Jews into gas chambers was bad, then it is morally unthinkable to make our peace with them; human lives cannot be traded off. Halfway measures may be the only available pathway to complete prohibition, but even so we should be willing to sacrifice almost anything to achieve them. As to those offensive analogies, it all comes down to whether we take our premises seriously: if an abortion is really a murder then thirty-seven million abortions are really a Holocaust. They aren't something that could happen here; they *are* happening here. Who has the better argument? In one point the symposiasts are right: The fact that our local oligarchy privatizes the pogrom does not make it any less a pogrom, and the burden is on their critics to show why ending it is no more important than Social Security reform. But in another point their critics are right: The privatization of the pogrom does make vague talk about "resistance" a little glib, and the burden is on the symposiasts to explain more clearly what they have in mind in the here and now.

The indictment for overheating supposes that judicial usurpation is not much different from the legislative and executive usurpations the republic has suffered in the past. I think this a dubious claim. On the other hand, the indictment for futility is grave and may be true. If the charge were that passive consent makes the complaints of the symposiasts inappropriate, then it would be sufficient to note, as several of them have, that the life of a republic depends not on passive but active consent; after all, the passive sort exists even under despotism. But what if the citizens no longer want a republic? If the judicial preemption of deliberations about our common life were ended, they might be made to care; but can they be made to care enough to end the preemption? As the symposiasts and even most critics agree, the only way to know their temper is to try them. Ahead is a long unexplored road of education, entreaty, and exhortation. We scarcely know what might be required of us; all the more reason for continuing this conversation.

What of the indictment for hypocrisy? Would the symposiasts be so hot for democracy if the culture of death had been promoted not by a renegade judiciary, but by the representatives of the sovereign people? The question seems unanswerable, but it conceals a fallacy. Ancient democracy meant that the most numerous group or class could do as it pleased.

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Constitutional democracy—which is really more like what Aristotle called "polity," mixed government, but ennobled (today) by the biblical understanding that human beings bear the image of God—means that many groups share power on principles of equal dignity, institutional balance, and natural justice. This is what the Founders meant when they spoke of a *novus ordo seclorum*, a new order for the ages, and a reversion to the failed model of antiquity would represent not the perfection of democracy but its corruption. In the constitutional sense, it would be no more "democratic" for a voting majority to prey on an unprotected class than for judges to tell them they may do so.

Of course it is one thing to admit that a majority can act undemocratically, and another to say what should be done if it does. Checks and balances are not a complete answer, for a determined and unscrupulous majority can subvert any restraints the mind of man can devise. The Founders counted on checks not to force bad men to act justly, but to slow down imperfect men until they could come to their senses by themselves. But all that is becoming academic. The problem in our era is that usurping judges use the checks entrusted to them not to protect the Constitution but to destroy it, and the majority has so far been too torpid to act.

Constitutional democracy does make some forms of resistance problematic, in particular revolution. On this point the symposiasts and their critics agree. I am one of those who doubt whether revolution can ever be justified; however, all sober theories of justified revolution insist, among other things, both that peaceful alternatives to revolution must have been exhausted, *and* that the majority, on whose consent the authority of every government depends, must concur. So long as the republic continues, these conditions can never be satisfied. As I understand them, the contributors to the symposium did not mean to deny the claim; their point is that if the judicial branch continues to entrench its usurpations, a day may come when the republic can no longer be said to continue. As I understand the critics, however, the point is true but idle. If that day should come it will have arrived only through the sloth of the usurped majority, and a people that lets their liberties slip through their fingers will hardly stoop to pick them up. In the meantime, talk of revolution can only inflame unstable minds. Both sides make good points; let us call this match a draw.

Civil disobedience is another matter altogether. Whereas revolution responds to a government that has no right to legislate, civil disobedience responds to a law that cannot in good conscience be obeyed. The "regime" does not have to be "illegitimate" for a law to be unconscionable. I hope readers will forgive me for what may seem scholastic hairsplitting, but it seems to me that much of the "End of Democracy?" confusion is based on the failure of both sides to make necessary distinctions of principle. After that should come case-by-case prudential judgment, which has hardly begun even now.

According to the classical analysis, from Thomas Aquinas, a law can be unjust in either of two ways, and the difference makes a difference. Some laws are unjust because they hinder our relationship to God, for example because they violate the commands of the Decalogue: do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, and so on. Others are unjust because they hinder our life in this world, for example because they serve private rather than public interest, impose disproportionate burdens, or exceed the authority of government.

Concerning laws unjust in the first way, our duty is simple: we *must* disobey, and that's flat. A law unjust in the second way *may* be disobeyed, but there is a catch. Thomas framed it in negative terms, suggesting that if the harm of the ensuing scandal or disturbance would be even greater than the harm of the law itself, the law should be obeyed. Martin Luther King, Jr. framed it in positive terms, suggesting that whoever disobeys must choose means that do not cause avoidable scandal or disturbance—for example by accepting the full legal penalty for breaking the law. John Calvin allowed only subordinate magistrates to resist the second kind of unjust law, because they share in the public authority; others argue that in a republic, citizenship is a public office too.

It is important to remember that civil disobedience is not just a Christian idea. Jewish law firmly maintains the superiority of God's law to man's, and the first known case of civil disobedience to unjust laws is from Torah—the refusal of Hebrew midwives to obey Pharaoh's edict to kill male Hebrew infants, recorded in Exodus 1:15-21. At stake in our own day is the killing not just of infants but of the unborn, disabled, aged, sick, or merely depressed. Several varieties of killing are already legal; several others are on the verge.

The argument that permissive laws cannot be disobeyed is weaker than it looks, because ultimately the culture of death cannot be sustained by permissive laws alone. It requires that certain monies change hands, certain officials do what they are told, certain voices be silenced, and certain information be suppressed. For a small example, in the 1994 case *Madsen v. Women's Health Center, Inc.*, the Supreme Court upheld a provision of Florida law establishing a thirty-six-foot zone around an abortion clinic, within which demonstrations were permitted by supporters of abortion—but not by supporters of life. A possible mode of civil disobedience for those who hold no office but their citizenship might have been to pray peacefully and silently within the zone, then accept the legal penalty for demonstration. For their part, judges and magistrates might have cooperated in enforcing preexisting laws against violence and

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trespass by persons of all persuasions, but refused to recognize ordinances that imposed harsher penalties just for holding the pro-life opinion. The penalty for them would presumably have been removal from office. A judge might also protest a law in a manner that does not involve civil disobedience by entering a judgment of conviction, but then suspending the sentence. The latter suggestion is from Michael W. McConnell's thoughtful essay "Bending the Law, Breaking the Law" (FT, June/July 1997).

My aim is not to recommend mass violations of the thirty-six-foot rule but to show that the option of disobedience cannot be ruled moot just because the government has not (yet) commanded us to abort our own children or euthanize our own grandmothers. The manifold regulations and intricate fiscal arrangements of the modern state present myriad opportunities to draw the line, and these need to be patiently considered. One crucial point is that even though laws and ordinances like the thirty-six-foot rule form part of the support structure for the culture of death, in themselves they are unjust only in the second way, not in the first. They don't directly violate commands of God such as "Do not murder"; they merely undermine the temporal common good, in this case by imposing disproportionate punishments and burdening the pro-life view with official opprobrium. In such cases civil disobedience is not an unconditional duty but a matter of discretion—something to be weighed according to whether, in the circumstances, it will do more good or harm. For example, a disadvantage of drawing the line *here* is that hostile journalists do all they can to obscure the difference between praying in the driveway and planting a bomb in the waiting room. Then there is the fact that the knowledge of blood flowing freely only a few dozen feet away is such a terrible goad that the distinction may disappear for some demonstrators too. These are powerful objections. But they are prudential objections, so there is no reason why the conversation between the symposiasts and their critics should end.

There remain the criticisms of the symposiasts concerning the appropriate role of religion in public life. The greatest obstacle to intelligent discussion about morality and religion in the public square is not a difference in principles, but a muddle in logic. It is literally impossible to eject either morality or religion from deliberation, not because people are stubborn but because decision and neutrality are inconsistent terms. All laws and regulations, from the prohibition of homicide to the list of allowable deductions from the income tax, embody suppositions about what is good and right. If the morality of Moses and Jesus is ejected, its place will merely be filled by another morality—the morality, perhaps, of Peter Singer, the newly appointed Ira W. DeCamp Professor of Bioethics at the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University, who believes that human babies have no greater moral value than snails. Moreover, the *Casey* Court had one thing right—all suppositions about what is good and right rest on larger suppositions about the "meaning of existence." Secularism isn't a way of getting on without such suppositions, but a way of getting on without admitting to anyone what they are. It is, in short, a fraud.

If I say that euthanasia should be illegal because murder violates the law of God, then obviously I suppose that there is a God, that He has a law, that this law ought to be obeyed, that it forbids murder, that euthanasia is murder, and that He commands the government to back Him up on such a point. If instead I say that euthanasia should not be illegal, then obviously I suppose either that there is no God, that even if there is a God He has no law, that even if He has a law it need not be obeyed, that even if it must be obeyed it does not forbid murder, that even if it does forbid murder euthanasia is not murder, or that even if euthanasia is murder He does not command the government to back Him up on such a point. If I seek relief from judgment in the doctrine that the state has neither the right nor the competence to decide such questions, then I deceive myself, for indecision is decision; to say that the state should not pass judgment on euthanasia is merely to suppose that euthanasia should be legal.

It is not enough to have no suppositions—at some point there must be a contrary supposition. That contrary supposition may be "secular," but it is still "religion" in that it is still about the meaning of the universe. The relevant distinction is not between a secular public life and a religious public life, but between a public life informed by a secular religiosity and a public life informed by the older religiosity that it opposes. A particular kind of morality and religion can be pushed out of the public realm, but morality and religion as such cannot be pushed out of the public realm.

What goes for deliberation goes for deliberation about deliberation. It is no use to say that religion may be invoked in debate about particular laws but not in reference to the constitutional framework within which such debate is held. To banish the religions that call themselves religions is merely to free the religions that do not call themselves religions from the burden of competition—whether the utilitarian religion of Expedience, the yuppie religion of Autonomy, or the mammonist religion of Wealth.

What goes for deliberation also goes for passion. Walter Berns suggests that by pushing morality and religion out of the public square, the Founders cooled those specially dangerous passions that wreck republics. This could be true only if the kinds of morality and religion they are supposed to have pushed out of the public square (assuming they pushed out any) are more responsible for reckless pas-

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sion than the kinds that would have taken their place. Empirical grounds for such a claim would seem to be lacking. Consider simply the history of our century.

Much more difficult to deal with is the idea that "generic" religious considerations may be invoked in the public square but that "sectarian" considerations should be avoided—that one may speak of God, but not quote Him. What makes the problem difficult is the vagueness of the idea of generic religion.

One possibility is that generic religion is "neutral" religion: just those ideas about God, good, and evil that all human beings embrace. The problem here is that no such ideas exist. Theravada Buddhists, for example, do not believe in a God at all, and Hindus believe that what they call God is beyond good and evil. Another possibility is that generic religion is "general revelation": not the ideas all humans do embrace, but the ones they all *ought* to embrace because God has "written them on their hearts." Here the problem is different; some traditions maintain strongly the reality of general revelation, while others deny it. Paradoxically, then, even the appeal to the generic presupposes the particular; for insight into what we hold in common, we must fall back on traditions we do not hold in common. The result is that to say "You must not speak of God except generically" is to say "The most important things about God you must not speak."

Another way to put the problem is that what is known to all is not admitted by all. Hebrew and Christian Scriptures portray the human race as in denial. This may seem an abstract point. In reality it is very practical. Consider for example the abortionist. We say the duty to protect innocent human life is known to every human being. The abortionist says it can't be, because it isn't known to him. What do we say? "Forgive us, we are mistaken, we thought you knew but you do not"? No, we say, "You are lying. Perhaps also to yourself, but you are lying. You say you do not know, but you do. On this point, we know what you know better than you know what you know." It is not from the lowest common denominator that we know this, not from Hallmark Cards, not from the Gallup Poll, but from the Letter to the Romans, from the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, from the seven laws given to the sons of Noah and explained by learned rabbis. No wonder the symposiasts quote from the "sectarian" documents of their traditions.

Their critics have a point. Not even Scripture says believers must always be quoting Scripture. When Paul spoke to the Athenians he began not with the Law and Prophets, but with what they knew already, quoting their poets and commenting on their altar "To An Unknown God." Just so must we begin with modern pagans.

But must we never stop beginning? Must all our anthems be nursery rhymes? Must we always serve porridge, never meat? Richard John Neuhaus denies it: "Short of the Kingdom," he says, "our public or political task in an inescapably pluralistic world is to find common moral ground for establishing and maintaining a humane life together. Christianity is unique in providing conceptual and practical resources for doing precisely that."

A final difficulty in continuing the conversation has been raised by Georgetown Government Professor George Carey—that our efforts to teach what the Constitution meant to the Framers will inevitably seem partisan. In a sense they are. We do have different commitments than the usurpers do, not only as to procedure, but also as to substance. We are no more "neutral" than they are; we are only more objective. A fair examination of the Founding documents does not support their claim to fulfill the intention of these texts, so the usurpers must ultimately take refuge in hocus-pocus like "non-interpretivist" interpretation. A fair presentation of their goals does not support their claim to fulfill the moral law, so they must ultimately take refuge in jabberwocky like a "different" moral law that lets everyone do as he likes. For a while people can be overawed by such incantations, but eventually they say "I don't get it—it seems like double-talk." At that point we can say, "It is"—and show them the mirrors, if only they are willing to look.

It may seem a terrible waste of time that so much of our teaching must be un-teaching, that almost all our effort must be expended just to prepare for Lesson One. I think we do very well to reach Lesson One—if we do reach it. Certainly the Founders reached no further. Lesson One is the highwater mark of all previous generations; speaking strictly of human wisdom, there is no Lesson Two. ◻

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The Parent Trap Times Three

Dana Mack

When my daughter was seven, her Austrian grandmother sent her three Erich Kaestner novels for Christmas. Her favorite was *Das Doppelte Lottchen*, a disarming tale about a pair of nine-year-old identical twins separated from infancy by an acrimonious divorce. When these girls meet accidentally at a summer camp and discover their common parentage, they devise a plan to switch places. The end result: a marital reconciliation.

Das Doppelte Lottchen, written in 1949, once promised to be one of those children's books—like *Heidi* and *The Secret Garden*—destined for imperishability. Published in English under the title *Lisa and Lotte*, it had three essential ingredients of a classic: suspense, pathos, and a happy ending. Most of all, it had something that very few children's books can boast—namely, a grip on reality. Kaestner was that rare children's author who needed no occult imagery or talking animals to charm the little ones. He spun fantastic enough tales, but they were spun from the stuff of real life, populated with people you could almost touch, and set in social milieus familiar to the average child. And they dealt in serious ways with intensely serious subjects, in this case with the subject of broken homes.

Sadly, *Das Doppelte Lottchen* is barely known outside German-speaking lands today. Or at least it would seem that way, to judge from the warm reception given the recent remake of a 1961 Disney comedy based on the Kaestner story: *The Parent Trap*. Oh, there have been some complaints. A number of critics have lamented the film's impossibly high spirits and phantasmagorically opulent settings. A few have even accused Disney and Co. of a certain insouciance in the treatment of family breakdown. But most reviewers have praised the new *Parent Trap* as a wholesome updating of a light and funny family classic, as entertainment purveying healthy values to children about the importance of two-parent homes. Curiously, nobody has commented on the stark contrast between the two Disney comedies and the very dramatic novel on which they were based.

To be brief, neither version of *The Parent Trap*—the old or the new—has much at all in common with the German story. The Disney films are about two energetic young ladies whose unremitting ingenuity and bottomless material resources enable them to engineer the resuscitation of their divorced parents' romance. The Kaestner story is about two far less fortunate girls whose loneliness and emotional desperation determines them to attempt to penetrate the secret of their painful separation. As we shall see, the difference between the Kaestner and the Disney approaches to the same kernel of plot is telling, for it reflects radically different views on the evils of marital disruption.

Kaestner was not one to shy away from exposing the grittier socioeconomic afflictions of divorce. In the case of *Das Doppelte Lottchen*, his main characters, the twins, are vulnerable and insecure, and one of them suffers real economic want. Unlike their Disney counterparts, who are both well-heeled and seem cut from the same character cloth, the Kaestner twins are very different personalities: one shy and industrious, the other saucy and lazy. The difference, Kaestner makes clear, is by no means inborn. Rather the girls have been raised differently. Lotte has been raised by a harried single mother who ekes out a hand-to-mouth existence as the photoeditor of a Munich tabloid. A latchkey child, Lotte has learned to be responsible for herself. She keeps house, prepares the meals, and tallies up the family expenditures. In fact, like many children of divorce, she has participated in a peculiar role reversal. A sensitive child, she nurtures her perpetually exhausted mama, who greets her from camp with the striking exclamation, "My little housemother! I finally have you back!"

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Luise, on the other hand, is spoiled—at least in material terms. Raised by her father, a well-known Viennese conductor and composer, she is the object of lavish attention among the staff and regulars at the tony Café Imperial, where she gorges herself daily on cheese-filled pancakes. But her hunger for affection and direction remains unsatisfied. Papa rarely has time for her, and the housekeeper entrusted with her daily care is indifferent to her.

If there ever was a literary appeal to parents to "stay together for the sake of the children," *Das Doppelte Lottchen* was it. Lotte and Luise are two kids set adrift in a world of adults seemingly unable to make any serious accommodation to childhood. The girls are driven to their adventure as much by the fragility of their ties to the parent who has raised them as by their curiosity about the parent whom they do not know. When Luise and Lotte resolve to switch identities, they have no explicit hope of bringing their mother and father together. Still less do they intend to confront their parents with questions about the past. Kaestner is clear as regards the modesty of the twins' scheme. "Perhaps together," he writes, "if they pay close attention, they will finally unravel the reasons their parents live separately. Perhaps one fine day, one wonderful day, they'll be together with both parents—but they dare not even think of such a possibility, much less speak of it."

In fact, the twins' distant dream of family reunification eventually becomes reality, but not through any of their own devices. Fortuitously, Mama is handed a photograph to caption and process for her newspaper—a picture of the girls taken at camp. It suddenly occurs to her why her once perfectly behaved "Lotte" has taken to burning the soup, turning in sloppy school work, and punching the school bully in the nose. Divining what her daughters have done, she confronts the child in her home who admits that yes, she is Luise, not Lotte. Mama then calls her ex-husband. At that point she finds out that the real Lotte, shocked by the anticipation of her father's upcoming second marriage, has fallen victim to a nervous illness. Over Lotte's sickbed a rapprochement between the divorced couple begins. It is based, incidentally, not on any initial reawakening of spousal affection, but on a family crisis, a crisis that makes Lotte and Luise's parents reconsider the sacred obligations they owe to their children to "make them happy."

Anyone who has seen the 1961 version of *The Parent Trap* will not need to be told how radically Walt Disney altered Kaestner's tale. The girls in his film, Susan and Sharon, are not only far richer, they are far older than Lotte and Luise; they are almost fourteen, rather than nine. Despite the fact that they are children of divorce, these young ladies seem to lead lives of near perfect emotional security and satisfaction—one in Boston, in the lap of an extended family, the other in Carmel with a father and two super-caring caregivers. Indeed, it is not their sense of loss that prompts Sharon and Susan to resolve to bring their parents together, but their sense of romance. They are convinced that "in their inner hearts" their parents still love each other, and have only remained separated because "that's how true love creates its beautiful agony."

Increasing the twins' age, maturity, and general level of comfort allowed producer Disney and director/screenwriter David Swift to transform an earnest tale of divorce into a send-up of marital discord. Boy and girl meet, fall in love, marry, fight stupidly, resolve to go their separate ways, and are confronted with regrets. The plot is all urban domestic comedy, yet with a fragile twist. The pioneering Disney adds children to his marriage roast, even making them the deus ex machina of his work.

In comparison to Kaestner's book, of course, Walt Disney's film was wildly improbable. In its most famous and most improbable scene, the girls, having chased away Dad's new fiancée, restage their parents' first date in the cellar of his house, gurgling a giddy rock serenade: "Let's get together, yeah, yeah, yeah!" It is a scene to make one grimace, but however corny, somehow it doesn't ruin the film. Under David Swift's adroit direction, with adept portrayals of the parents by Maureen O'Hara and Brian Keith, and a signature performance by Hayley Mills (who played the twins), the Disney Company managed to invest *The Parent Trap* with a significant amount of erotic tension and very little sentiment. Indeed, the film may well have been Walt Disney's most unsentimental. Certainly it was his most adult film in subject matter, dialogue, and character development. And beyond its hokey moments, what it had to say about marriage was of some interest. If for Kaestner an intact home was the single requisite of childhood well-being, for Disney, an intact home was the single requisite of adult well-being.

When we first meet Brian Keith and Maureen O'Hara in the 1961 film, they are for all intents and purposes de-sexed. O'Hara's voluptuous curves are hidden beneath dark, spinsterly dresses. Her hair is bundled into a beehive. Her manner is detached. She may lead the glamorous life of a wealthy socialite, but for all her privilege, she is weary and embittered. While Brian Keith looks to be in better physical shape, his Western rancher character seems likewise libidinally challenged. At the opening of the film, he has just become engaged to a beautiful young woman, but it is she who has pursued him. Even after their betrothal, he persists in behaving with her like a man perfectly resigned to going to bed alone.

Slowly, with prompting by their children, the characters played by Keith and O'Hara begin to warm up. Both initially resist the girls' inquiries

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about their parents' romantic past; yet, as memories are jogged, the old sexual impulses begin once again to bubble to the surface. Before leaving for California and a rendezvous with her ex-husband, O'Hara procures a more fashionable and alluring look. Keith—typical man—is slower on the uptake. He has no inkling of O'Hara's re-entrance into his life until she's already been in his house for several hours. But there is a wonderful scene in which he unexpectedly encounters her brassiere hanging in his bathroom. He gingerly picks up the object and examines it. At that moment, it's clear he's done for.

It would have been easy enough for Disney and Swift to have allowed the characters played by Keith and O'Hara to rediscover their mutual attraction, fall into each other's arms, and live happily ever after. But this is not the tack taken. As their romance is rekindled, Mom and Dad don't simply fall in love all over again; they replay their checkered romantic history. To watch their initial re-encounter is to see them metamorphose in a matter of minutes from sublimely even-tempered single parents to irascible married lovers. It's a discomfiting, if comical, transmutation, and it culminates in a riotous moment: Keith, angered to find O'Hara parading around his home in his bathrobe at the very moment he is planning his second wedding, starts barking orders at her to get dressed. In response, she hauls off and punches him. The point here is not that family violence is funny, but that love is a volatile proposition, wedded love not for the faint of heart. Disney makes very clear where Keith and O'Hara went wrong the first time around: As modern adults with an acute sense of propriety, they failed to accept the protracted skirmish that is erotic pair-bonding. If they had been willing to forgo some dignity for the sake of happiness, they might have humbled themselves long ago before the grand design of domestic warfare. Now, thanks to their children, they will get a second chance to man the trenches.

The Parent Trap's take on marital conflict, then, is that it is a natural part of the game of married love, feeding the fires of Eros and exercising the muscles of the marriage bond. Near the end of the film, Keith reflects on the precious time together he and his ex-wife have lost, and the emptiness he has felt without her: "You know what I miss?" he asks. "I don't care if it does sound silly, but I miss those wet stockings you used to have hanging around the bathroom, and . . . my razor being dull because you used it to shave your legs with; and I miss the hair pins mixed with the fish hooks in the tackle box. It's no fun having a clothes closet all to myself; and it's no fun swearing, because you're not around to pretend you're shocked. In fact, nothing's any good without you, Maggie. I miss a lot of things. . . . I guess I just miss you."

In short, Walt Disney had an important message to deliver. Go ahead and fight, he seemed to be saying to parents everywhere. Lose your tempers all you want, but keep your marriage together. It must have been a refreshingly old-fashioned message in the early sixties, when divorce was on the rise, and open spousal conflict—especially physical conflict—was widely regarded by professionals as an indication of serious marital dysfunction.

Indeed, Disney's message about marital relations has never seemed so antiquated as it does today. Yet, never has it been more urgently needed. In this era of high marital failure rates, research shows the single most important predictor of divorce to be avoidance of conflict. That is, people who divorce typically do not fight with their spouses any more than those who stay married. Rather, people who divorce are not able to handle marital conflict with the equanimity that enables them to preserve and strengthen their marital ties.

One might expect that the new, 1998 *Parent Trap* would resemble Disney and Swift's sophisticated roast of the marital estate. Curiously, it is slightly closer in sentiment to Erich Kaestner's more earnest story of divorce and reconciliation. While producer Charles Shyer and director Nancy Meyers have cannibalized whole scenes from Swift's 1961 *Parent Trap* screenplay, they have eliminated nearly all its acerbic moments, and focused far more on the appeal of the children than on the appeal of the parents. Indeed, though Shyer and Meyers are themselves a married couple, in their remake of *The Parent Trap* they have neglected altogether to set up a believable marital history for the twins' parents. There may be some vague references to the conflicts of the past—to objects thrown, insults hurled, and a general "driving" each other "nuts"; yet, no hints of post-divorce bitterness, no fights, no tensions at all in the ex-spousal relationship are played out on screen. Dennis Quaid and Natasha Richardson, cast as the romantic leads, are not simply the image of gay divorcés when we meet them—eminently attractive and available—they are played throughout the film as if completely unburdened by any romantic past.

It would seem that Shyer and Meyers believe today's "family viewing" market to be allergic to the suggestion of anger or anguish in conjunction with family life. Their two-hour film is laboriously warm, fuzzy, and cute. The twins—who in this version reside in Napa and London, respectively—are restored to childhood, and despite their frequent protestations of a desperate wish for two parents, are played by the charming Lindsay Lohan with that self-sufficiency and complaisant pre-pubescent prescience audiences might recognize from such hits as *Home Alone*. Like the children, the parents are cheerful, fashionable, accomplished, and independent. Everyone is, indeed, "too cool!" as twin "Hallie" observes of her glamorous screen-mother on meeting her. So cool, indeed, so autonomous, so perfectly sit-

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uated that one could not conceive of anyone's being in need of anything. Not even love. Especially not love. For there is already a surfeit of laughs and kisses and hugs and gushes in each respective broken home; even the British butler dispenses these things with reckless abandon. And if all that love weren't enough, ecstatic product endorsements—for everything from Oreos and Skippy peanut butter to Jeeps, the Concorde, and the QEII—remind us of what really makes for happiness in the modern world. Family reunification could hardly be portrayed as more superfluous than in this film. Curiously, even the reconciliation scene between Mom and Dad fails to move; it is eclipsed by a far more effusive love affair between the household help.

In short, if feelings and markets be the driving forces of the Zeitgeist, the new *Parent Trap* is about as contemporary as a movie could possibly be; it addresses both in profusion. What it does not address, however, is any meaningful social observation about family life. If the film's ultimate message—that children deserve an intact family—is noble enough, it can't get anywhere with the message, because it fails to seriously broach the questions of why or how. Shyer and Meyers have constructed a world far too whimsical and euphoric to provide a meaningful context for the moral of their story. Unlike Kaestner, they fail to address the poverty—both economic and emotional—that characterizes children of divorce. And they ignore the depletion of energy and resources that marks the lot of single parents disappointed in love. Unlike their cinematic predecessors, they don't even bother to address the work involved in keeping a modern family intact—the endless challenges of living, loving, fighting, working, and parenting together.

In their diverse treatments of the same story, Kaestner's book and the two Disney films enable us to trace three distinct attitudes toward marriage as conveyed to young people in the past fifty years. In *Das Doppelte Lottchen*, Erich Kaestner clearly views marriage as a child-rearing bond. In his tale, the conjugal romance, upon the appearance of children, takes a very low second place to the exigencies of parenthood. The needs of children are the focus of family life, and mothers and fathers—whether love lasts between them or not—are considered to have a sacred obligation to meet these needs together. Indeed, in his story the twins are nothing more than a metaphor for the single child of divorce whose life—whose very identity—is split into two irreconcilable parts, the part that remains in the reconstituted home, and the part that has left with the parent that has left. Each twin, in fact, suffers immeasurably the emotional and economic weaknesses of her erstwhile custodial arrangement.

Kaestner's approach, in essence, is to convey the traditional ethos of marriage—a meta-cultural ethos of marital duty which, as anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski would put it, defines marriage as "the end of romance" and "the beginning of a sterner task . . . the production and maintenance of children." Kaestner's is a story of marriage as a static institution, one that meets prescribed socioeconomic functions involving prescribed cultural roles for men and women.

In the Walt Disney/David Swift story, children are no longer at the center of family life. Rather, the marital romance—that most dangerous, exhausting, yet promising of erotic adventures—comes to the fore. Disney's ethos of marriage is no longer traditional, although clearly it is rooted in the Judeo-Christian story of the First Marriage. Here, the defining relationship of marriage is not the one of parents to children, but of husbands to wives. As Eve is to Adam—both a "fitting helper" and the agitator of his fall from innocence—so every woman is to her man. As Adam extorts his revenge (Does not God scold Eve: "In pain shall you bear children, Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you"?), so every husband to his wife.

There is purpose in the marital union above and beyond the bearing and rearing of children. That purpose involves the erotic experience of otherness, the drive to physical and spiritual union with someone fundamentally different from ourselves. The needs adults have for sexual intimacy, and the unique companionship, mutual regard, amusement, and struggle that life-long sexual intimacy brings become every bit as important (if not more important) to the institution of marriage as the task of child-rearing.

The great theme of Disney's movie, then, is the primacy and delicacy of the marital romance, always vulnerable to the conflicting sensibilities and power struggles that define relations between the sexes. For Disney, marriage is less an institution than an organism. A modern marriage is kept alive not by virtue of duty, but by virtue of love. How to keep love alive? Lighten up, he suggests. Marriage may be serious, but it should be serious fun.

In the more recent *Parent Trap*, the story told of marriage is again different. Perhaps a tad more of the old concept of parental duty has crept back into a marital ideal that primarily celebrates the spousal romance. "Love," after all, as the words of the film's title song go, "is more than just a game for two." But the marital romance itself becomes idealized in a new way. Marriage is seen solely as a union of allies, not as a union of potential adversaries. The marital estate is no longer viewed as a safe haven for the exercise of that inevitable contention bound to plague every romance. Rather the opposite. In this film, only the immature marriage, the "first time around" marriage, involves conflict. The second time around promises a marriage perfectly free of conflict, a composed alliance between two mature, settled human

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beings who have resolved—in the words of the reunited couple—to "grow old together" but who no longer share either the capability or the desire to drive one another "nuts."

In a way, the new *Parent Trap* reflects a disturbing trend in contemporary thinking about marriage, a trend to increasing discomfort with marital conflict, and a growing conviction among young married people that to be successful a marriage must be completely harmonious. Balzac once wrote that "a happy marriage is the result of a perfect understanding between two souls." Surely such a perfect understanding is every married couple's goal. But to pretend that such a goal may be reached without abiding contest is to denature the volatile intimacy of sexual love, even ultimately to de-eroticize our most romantic cultural institution. Certainly, it is to deny marriage its crucial psychological function as a refuge and outlet for the passions, as well as to deny our children adequate training for lasting marital unions. After all, if we are obliged to teach our young only one lesson, it must be the honest lesson of what it takes to keep a marriage together: love, a sense of duty, and yes—sometimes—a good, sporting fight. FT

Grania at the Museum of Science and Industry

I am Grania.
I am sitting here looking at a baby in a bottle.
Its feathery hair floats in formaldehyde,
Its eyes are closed tight in an undersea nap
From which there will be no awakening.
It has everything,
All the human necessities,
Fingernails
Eyelashes
Tiny conch-like ears
Dimples and creases and a fat little belly.
It's a great little baby,
Except that it's dead.

Bottled rudiments, all in a row.
Flecks of humanity
Dropped from inhospitable wombs,
Cold-packed by scientists from
A bleak harvest to be placed
Like a housewife's summer's work
On a cellar shelf. This freak show.
Is this one mine? That one yours?
The mothers come as if to Parents' Day at school
To wonder who is the prize of the display,
Unique in some hellish way.

By this one, I am beguiled.
Observe that plump rump.
Reminds me
Of J. Swift's recipe
For fricassee
Of child.

In the first flush of love,
My true love gave to me
One embryo
Nestled inconveniently.
She was a girl,
With her sex tucked inward between fat little pads.
Just one of many abandoned by fun-loving dads.

By the third week,
There was a heart,
A mere pinpoint, but
Though its elfin beats are silenced,
They echo and echo,
Sending bubbles of reproach to the top of
the jar.
And I hear
And hear
And I feel
Your gargantuan wrath,
but from afar.
Sorry, sweetie,
Mommie simply had to commit you to
the jar.

Rosemary Hamilton

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Thomas Aquinas: A Doctor for the Ages

Romanus Cessario

Why should a medieval Catholic priest merit a place among the most important figures of the second millennium? In part because more than seven centuries after his death his writings and teachings still seem fresh and—more importantly—true. His genius as a thinker and teacher has led thousands of scholars to carry on the intellectual projects and hand on the teachings in philosophy and theology of this thirteenth-century Neapolitan Dominican friar, whose physical size and taciturn spirit prompted some of his youthful confreres to label him the "Dumb Ox." But you don't have to be a Thomist to appreciate the genius of Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274). This *Doctor communis* has something to offer everyone who is serious about searching for the truth. He is a Doctor for the ages.

I

Thomas Aquinas was born to a landed aristocratic family that played a conspicuous role in the turbulent political life of the early thirteenth-century Italian peninsula. But unlike Augustine of Hippo, also a foundational doctor of the Western Church, Thomas d'Aquino, notwithstanding his prolific writing, surrenders very few details of his own biography, and so our knowledge of his family interactions and other personal matters remains limited, almost all coming second-hand, mostly from hagiographers. At the same time, the saint's theological and philosophical compositions disclose both his own spirit as a Christian believer and the magnitude of his intellectual acumen.

Aquinas was born and spent his early years in the Kingdom of Sicily. It was a time when Frederick II (1194-1250) and Pope Gregory IX (c.1148-1241) were at warring odds with one another. In 1239, when Aquinas was fourteen, the Pope excommunicated Frederick, who had initiated an invasion into the Papal States as part of a long-delayed offensive against the Lombard communes. This momentous clash between civil and ecclesiastical authority was only the first of many conflicts that would dominate the social circumstances in which Aquinas constructed his massive corpus of theological and philosophical writings. Later at Paris, new conflicts, on the one hand between Churchmen and religious orders and on the other between Aristotelian philosophers and Augustinian theologians, again provided both background and stimulus for Aquinas' intellectual work. And later still in Italy, long-standing antagonisms between the See of Rome and the churches of the East—aggravated by a then two-hundred year old schism—significantly influenced the way that Aquinas would deploy his intellectual energies. Even towards the end of his life, Aquinas was compelled to confront conflictual circumstances, but this time they took the form of intramural squabbles among his fellow Dominicans, some of whom still thought that ordained ministry could best be learned after the fashion of a guild-craft, while others, inspired by Aquinas' own example, understood that the Christian priest, because he participates in Christ's own mediation, requires a scientific instruction in the deposit of saving truth.

The political conflicts that affected Aquinas' personal background resulted, for the most part, from the growth and strengthening of centralizing tendencies in both ecclesiastical and secular affairs that took place at the beginning of the thirteenth century. The unprecedented expression of political as well as of theological unity in the Church achieved by Pope Innocent III at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 inaugurated this period of profound cultural change. Alasdair MacIntyre argues that these conditions exercised an influence even on Aquinas' treat-

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ment of such speculative concepts as natural law. Certainly, one cannot appreciate fully the kind of stability that Aquinas' theology and philosophical investigations introduced into the world of Christian thought without bearing in mind the turbulence that marked the social, political, and ecclesiastical milieus during his lifetime.

The social changes occasioned by the transition from feudal to urban Europe formed the background for the scholastic revival of the thirteenth century. Contrary to some accounts, European culture before the sixteenth-century renaissance was not darkly glum. In fact, Christian civilization in the West underwent an extraordinary renaissance in the twelfth century, when a massive effort was mounted to retrieve and organize past learning in diverse fields. This development enabled Aquinas to make creative use of the many philosophical advances that accompanied the introduction of Aristotle to the West.

During his education with the Benedictine monks at Monte Cassino and later in Naples at the first European university to operate under entirely secular control (which Frederick II founded in 1224), the young Thomas Aquinas enjoyed the usual prerogatives of his social class and standing. It seems that his parents had plans for their son to pursue an ecclesiastical career of distinction. The direction of his life changed dramatically, therefore, when he abandoned his family's aspirations and joined the newly established brotherhood of Dominicans. The traditional accounts of his attempt to join the friars, which include tales of imprisonment and attempted seduction, reflect the emotional conflict that Aquinas' decision created within his family.

Studies in Paris and Cologne followed. In these high centers of intellectual life, Aquinas joined other young Dominicans who had been placed under the tutelage of Albertus Magnus, the early Dominican theologian and natural philosopher. His education was not only traditional, involving close studies of the Scriptures, of the Western Fathers, and of Church law, but also innovative, inasmuch as Aquinas discovered the new wave of Aristotelian philosophy, which included the areas of natural, moral, and "rational" (rhetoric, grammar, and logic) philosophy.

Between 1252 and 1259, Aquinas fulfilled with signal success the obligations of a thirteenth-century university instructor and professor, notwithstanding the conflicts and disputes that continued both within and outside the lecture halls. On one occasion, the French king had to station the royal archers around the Dominican convent in Paris to defend the friars against attacks from partisans of the secular masters. These secular clerics (*secular* meaning not a member of a religious order) found it difficult to accept the new friars into their ranks. In the midst of this turmoil, Aquinas had to meet rapid changes in theology and became adept at navigating the intellectually challenging waters of the medieval scholastic *disputatio*. On August 15, 1257, both he and the Franciscan doctor Bonaventure were admitted to the *consortium magistrorum*, that is, they were recognized as full members of the professorial corps.

In 1259 Aquinas returned to the Italian peninsula, where he accomplished a variety of tasks in service to both the papacy and the Dominican Order. These tasks included preaching sermons not only to the papal household, but also to the inhabitants of the cities where the Pope was residing. Today at Orvieto one can still see an outdoor pulpit that Aquinas mounted to preach the Word of God and still read sermons Aquinas preached in his native Neapolitan dialect. In the midst of duties as theological advisor for the papal curia, he also found time to teach theology to young Dominicans. The *Summa Theologiae* dates from this period. This systematic tract was intended to cultivate the preacher's ability first to ponder and then to communicate the gospel, and so served as a tool to fulfill the Dominican ideal: To contemplate and to give to others the fruits of one's contemplation.

Circumstances of conflict, however, once more directed the development of Aquinas' apostolic activity, bringing him back to Paris for a second period of teaching between 1268 and 1272. There he devoted his energies to allaying the uneasiness that the pagan philosophy of Aristotle caused among theologians of a more traditional Augustinian persuasion, while at the same time he critically engaged those who used philosophy to contradict the truths of Christianity. Thinking about the faith is always risky business. Some people are frightened by the prospect, and so fall back into a kind of credulous fideism that explains Christian doctrine by appeal only to the categories one finds in revelation itself. Others become intoxicated with the project, and so construct a kind of censorious rationalism that trims the supernatural content of divine revelation in order to fit the categories established by human reason. Aquinas' merit is that he succumbs to neither temptation.

During his second Parisian stay, Aquinas continued his battle in defense of the mendicant religious orders, in particular the Franciscans and Dominicans, whose newly authorized place within the university structure continued to cause tensions among the already-established secular masters. Before the advent of the mendicant orders, religious priests were for the large part found only in monasteries, and so avoided day-to-day involvement in Church affairs. Francis and Dominic brought the monastery to the cities and towns of Europe, and so intruded into an arena that up to that time had been dominated by a diocesan bishop and his clergy. Feelings ran high. We know of only two times in his life when Aquinas lost his composure, and one occurred when he learned

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that certain persons were cornering prospective students in the back streets of Paris in order to dissuade them from attending the lectures of the mendicant masters.

After the three-year cycle of lectures and disputations that constituted in the thirteenth century a term of office for the friar who held the Dominican chair at the University of Paris, Aquinas returned once again to Italy. At Naples, he took up his academic work, teaching Dominicans about the Bible and continuing to write his *Summa Theologiae*. But providence was about to intervene in a dramatic way.

During his first sojourn in the Papal States, Aquinas had composed a compendium of arguments to be used by the theologians charged by the Pope with carrying on dialogue with schismatic Byzantine theologians. So when Gregory X convoked a council at Lyons for May 1, 1274 in order to achieve mutual understanding with the separated Greeks, he numbered Aquinas among the experts who were asked to join the deliberations. While traveling northward from Naples, Aquinas suddenly fell ill, and on March 7 he died in the early hours of the morning at the Cistercian monastery of Fossanova.

Faithful to his profession of mendicant simplicity and to the Dominican objective of preaching sacred truth, Aquinas, during the course of his adult career, politely but firmly refused both the abbacy of Monte Cassino and the archbishopric of Naples. The first he declined at the start of his ministry, the second at its end. By these decisions, he disengaged himself from parochial conflicts, and so was free to make a permanent contribution to theological learning in the universal Church.

What is that permanent contribution? In his 1988 Gifford Lectures, Alasdair MacIntyre explained that Aquinas' approach to theology provides a standpoint that is coherent, comprehensive, and resourceful in its ability to deal critically and creatively with opposing views. This is not to say that Aquinas supplies the software that fits all hardware. Diversity marks his legacy. From the years following his death until the late fifteenth century, the label of "Thomist" was generally applied to those who emphasized the created world, instead of the divine ideas, as the foundation for acquiring knowledge. The ecclesiastical condemnations of Aquinas' teaching in 1277 and 1284, even though moot long before their formal revocation shortly after Aquinas' canonization in 1323, reveal the kinds of difficulties that attended a transition to the new theological forms that Aquinas' teaching embodied. The censures, to be sure, were politically motivated, but they reveal a traditional preference for the heritage of Bernard of Clairvaux over that of Anselm of Canterbury. In brief, commentary was safe, whereas thinking was risky. Some refer to this period as "first Thomism," when the opposition to Thomist propositions arose mainly from tradition-bound theologians who were persuaded that in the end it was a mistake for a theologian to take nature too seriously.

The diverse ways that theologians explained both the origin of human knowledge and the ground for the certitude of that knowledge illustrates the kind of issues that marked this transition. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, the received tradition explained human knowledge by appeal to some variety of divine illumination. In short, God infused into the human mind whatever was required to acquire true knowledge. Illuminationists generally conceived of the soul as a mirror or receptacle ready to capture the rays of intelligibility from the Divine Mind. While such a view enjoyed the advantage of placing human intelligence into a fixed and comfortable relation with the Supreme intelligence, it also asserted that only divine illumination guaranteed that the human being obtained true and trustworthy knowledge of sensible realities.

As a result of reading Aristotle, Aquinas had come to a different conclusion about achieving certitude in knowing. Rather than looking to illumination in order to guarantee the authenticity of the created world, he argued that the created world itself, the world of mobile nature and natural things, possessed its own intelligibility and, furthermore, that God had equipped the human mind to capture it. What is more important, he argued that since human beings know the reality of the world, they also can move demonstratively from this sure knowledge back to a sure knowledge of God, at least as He is the cause of this creation. Aquinas pointed out at least five different ways in which this argument could proceed. In sum, Aquinas took away the skyhooks, and the theological world did not collapse. The problem is a perennial one, and there are still theologians who look for ways to put the skyhooks back up. In any event, it took time for some of his contemporaries to accept Aquinas' innovations in theological argument, and this explains the controversies that erupted after his death.

By the time of the sixteenth-century Protestant reform, work on Aquinas had become more identified with straightforwardly theological issues, as exemplified in the influence that his *Summa Theologiae* exercised on the Council of Trent. Those who criticized the "Common Doctor" did so because they considered either his theology not sufficiently humanist or his humanism not fully radicalized. This "second Thomism" continued to flourish widely during the early modern period. Witness that during the second half of the seventeenth century, for example, two Chinese translations of the *Summa* were published in Peking.

In the decades after the European revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Church again turned to Aquinas' works to solve

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problems mainly of a philosophical nature. This "third Thomism" is more commonly known as "neo-Thomism." Some post-Vatican II theologians, it is true, supposed that neo-Thomism signaled Thomism's last breath, but John Paul II has recently offered another assessment. Speaking of Aquinas, the Pope says, "In him, the Church's Magisterium has seen and recognized the passion for truth; and, precisely because it stays consistently within the horizon of universal, objective, and transcendent truth, his thought scales 'heights unthinkable to human intelligence'" (*Fides et Ratio,* no. 44).

II

The teaching of Thomas Aquinas has exercised an active influence mainly but by no means exclusively on Western intellectual movements for three-quarters of the millennium that is now coming to a close. The legacy of Aquinas to world culture flows like a winding river through many different terrains, while its waters pick up sediments from the different geological formations that form its bed. During its more than seven-hundred-year history, Thomism has influenced nearly every field of human learning, and Thomists have found themselves geographically dispersed, albeit unevenly, throughout the whole world.

Interest in Aquinas spread quickly after his death. Since the new mendicant orders sent their students to learn theology in places such as Paris and Oxford, Aquinas' works were first studied principally in the university cities of Europe. The earliest Thomists gathered around these new centers of learning as well as those at Cologne, Bologna, and of course Naples. The study of Aquinas then followed the development of the universities in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Bohemia, Vienna, Cracow, and Louvain. In the period before the Council of Trent and during its sessions, the major Thomists worked in Southern France and in Northern Italy, whereas in the post-Tridentine period, Aquinas' legacy flourished principally in Spain and the Spanish Netherlands. It was not until 1611, when Spanish Dominicans established a university in Manila, that Aquinas' works spread to the New World, and from there even to the Far East. In the twentieth century, Aquinas flourished in both Europe and the United States, and even rekindled Asian Thomism in authors such as the Japanese Yoshinori Inagaki.

Aquinas' legacy is not only found everywhere, but also has had an impact on every branch of higher learning. In the decades immediately following Aquinas' death, Thomists continued to welcome the introduction of Aristotle into the West, and so challenged many theological truisms. Later, in the sixteenth century, Thomists answered the objections raised by the Protestant reformers against the Church's teaching on justification, the sacraments, and the nature of the Church herself, while others were developing the theoretical groundwork for contemporary international law. From the start, then, Aquinas inspired discussions that range from mystical theology to cosmology, and from political theory to personal morality. Those who followed him, whatever their differences, shared the basic conviction that to think and teach and write *ad mentem S. Thomae Aquinatis* remains a sure guide to the truth of the Christian faith and of the human person. That influence extends to our time: It would be impossible to understand the debates and documents of the Second Vatican Council without acquaintance with the principal theses that discussions influenced by Aquinas had developed over the course of nearly seven centuries.

We learn something important about both theology and philosophy from this wide-ranging legacy. On the one hand, we learn what makes theology to be just that, a "word about God." On the other, we learn that philosophy draws the human spirit up toward "heights unthinkable to human reason."

Aquinas proceeded on the supposition that all theological writing ought to express the unity of divine truth; in his phrase, theology is like an impression of the divine knowledge in the created mind. Because he grasped this connection, Aquinas would reject today's tendency to regard theology as a constellation of diverse fields of specialized inquiry whose only unity derives from the fact that they somehow coalesce to promote Christian service. Instead he held theology to be a single divine science about God, which is able to express the one divine knowledge that governs without qualification everything that exists. In other words, Aquinas was persuaded that the best theology reflects the simplicity of God whose knowledge of himself remains the one source of all true wisdom.

Aquinas' own compositions do not fit easily the modern categories that theologians use to classify and describe their work. He was, in those terms, neither a researcher nor a theorist. On the contrary, Aquinas appreciated the unity of truth that flows from the divine simplicity, and would have been deeply repelled by conflicting truth claims produced by theologians asserting expertise in one or another theological discipline. At the same time, because Aquinas understood that theology is about ordering truths to the one Truth, and not assembling facts about many different topics, none of his works fits the literary genre of the encyclopedia, which always depends on recent research to modify what until that moment had been provisionally considered as true. Put differently, Aquinas recognized the formal difference that distinguishes theology as a divine science from religious studies as a human one. The latter always remains bound by the limits that reliance

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on a purely rational form of inquiry imposes. By sharp contrast, the theologian is possessed of something more.

A particular conception of the unity of theology did not keep Aquinas from developing a proficiency in diverse forms of theological and philosophical composition. Not counting his earlier expositions of certain Old Testament books—Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lamentations—which he composed while studying with Albertus Magnus in Cologne, Aquinas produced during his relatively brief professional career (1252-1273) a body of literature that includes works of every description: theological syntheses, disputed questions, biblical commentaries, commentaries on Aristotle, commentaries on other classical works commonly in use at medieval universities, polemical writings, treatises on specific subjects, letters and replies to requests for expert opinions on particular issues, liturgical works, sermons, and prayers. All in all, a rich array of publications for one thirteenth-century man to produce within a period of little over twenty years, even taking into account the fact that he was at times aided by as many as four secretaries. Of course, Aquinas himself would not have agreed. Toward the end of his life he compared everything that he had written to straw, and like St. Paul he preferred above all things to know the Lord Jesus, who, according to the received account, himself spoke to Thomas from a crucifix hanging in the St. Nicholas chapel: "You have written well of me, Thomas! What do you desire?" To which, Thomas replied, "*Non nisi te, Domine.*" Only you, Lord Jesus. Because his own "words about God" drew Aquinas back to God, the Church sees in this Dominican the model of a true theologian.

At the same time, we can learn from Aquinas' legacy about the importance of philosophy for undertaking theological investigation. In the early part of the present century, when the revival of interest in Aquinas inaugurated by Pope Leo XIII was reaching its full vigor, certain ecclesiastical authorities decided that it would be useful to express Aquinas' philosophical principles in the form of short theses or propositions. Although this objective, undertaken in the aftermath of the Modernist crisis, aimed more toward promoting a sound pedagogy than creating a narrow ideology, the Church did give quasi-official recognition to *The Twenty-Four Theses* that were held to embody the essentials of realist philosophy to be found in Aquinas' writings.

We can indicate only some of the principal positions this effort promoted. The Thomist philosopher is best described as a metaphysical realist, who judges the conclusions, at least in their classical expression, of both idealism and positivism as untenable. The latter denies the existence of universal ideas, at least in the mind of creatures, whereas the former rejects the epistemological principle that nothing exists in the intellect that was not first in sense knowledge. In natural philosophy, Thomists defend the realism of creation, or what some theologians might want to designate the scandal of creation. In natural theology, Thomists hold the conviction that from the visible things of the universe the human mind can know the existence of God, who enjoys his own subsistent fullness of pure actual being, and who possesses no limitation of any kind, because nothing of potential remains in Him. No creature enjoys this status of pure act, and so Thomists espouse in metaphysics what Father James Weisheipl calls the "disturbing distinction" between essence and existence, which entails by way of corollary the conviction that every creature depends on the actuality of borrowed existence. Thomists think only in terms of analogical predication, such that the metaphysical concept of being is analogically, not univocally, said of God, substances, and accidents. In moral philosophy, they also argue for the primacy of intelligence in determining what is true about the moral life. While some Thomists espouse other theses in philosophy, this brief catalogue of philosophical views illustrates those held by any thinker who claims to stand in historical continuity with the teachings of Thomas Aquinas.

We can understand the Holy See's decision to promote the philosophical standpoint of Aquinas by reference to the traditional way of depicting the 1879 encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*: "On the Restoration in Catholic Schools of Christian Philosophy According to the Mind of the Angelic Doctor Saint Thomas Aquinas." The encyclical itself does not carry this title, but Pope Leo described it in that way the following year when he declared Saint Thomas to be the patron of studies in Catholic schools.

The reference to "Christian Philosophy" recalls that neo-Thomism, as it would later become known, was promoted by the Church in response to the widespread use of Cartesian manuals of philosophy in Christian education. Seminary training was especially affected, and this realization generated well-grounded fears that a new generation of priests would find themselves not only unfamiliar with the integrity of Catholic faith but also tempted to separate truth from experience. Rationalism does not prepare the mind to believe that God sent his Son into the world to be its way, truth, and life. Recall that Aquinas, as Pope John Paul II has confirmed, produced a philosophy of "what is," not of "what seems to be." Reality offers much more to philosophize about than do appearances. Pope Leo wanted to steer Church thinking away from the fascination with the apparent that had captivated European thought in the modern period, and we can see in retrospect that his initiative promoted a flowering of Catholic intellectual life.

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Aquinas inspired much of the theology and philosophy that flourished in Catholic circles during the period between the two World Wars, and his teaching continued to receive papal endorsements after the Second Vatican Council. Pope Paul VI used the ceremonies that marked the seventh centenary of the death of Saint Thomas in 1974 to commend an "authentic fidelity to Thomas." The 1983 revision of the Code of Canon Law further applauds Aquinas as a master who can lead students of theology to a deep penetration of the mysteries of salvation (CIC 252 § 3). A few years earlier, the same theme had appeared in the 1979 Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* (especially Nos. 71 & 80), which presently governs the administration of ecclesiastical universities and faculties. Finally, the 1998 encyclical letter of John Paul II restates the confidence that the Church places in Aquinas as a thinker capable of leading people to a knowledge of the truth. Although *Fides et Ratio* enforces no allegiance to a specific set of philosophical theses, it does condemn those intellectual positions that faithful adherence to Aquinas inhibits: eclecticism, historicism, scientism, pragmatism, and nihilism.

In *Fides et Ratio* the Pope also acknowledged the enduring originality of Aquinas' approach both to thinking about the truth that God has revealed in Christ and to expressing the harmonies that arise once the rational creature is enabled to ponder what "eye hath not seen" (Isaiah 64:4). What is perhaps more pertinent for earning recognition in the second millennium, the Pope also cited Saint Thomas "because of the dialogue which he initiated with the Arab and Jewish thought of his time" (no. 43). Whatever its source, Aquinas, we are told, revered the truth. No wonder popes have reserved for him the distinguished epithet, "apostle of the truth."

It is Aquinas' profound love for the Incarnation that makes him still a faithful guide for preserving the Christian Church from errors that erode her confession of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Aquinas knew that because God chose to save the human race by sending his only Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, the Church of Christ is committed to reconciling the human and divine. Aquinas teaches us the right way to view the creation of the world with the new creation of the gospel. There is every reason, therefore, to suppose that at the end of the millennium about to commence he will still rank among the figures who have most influenced the course of human intellectual activity. The desire to know the truth that God has placed in the human heart will not disappear, nor will the two wings of faith and reason on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of this truth. Thomas Aquinas illumines the dynamics of this upward flight. FT

Comma

... of all that is, seen and unseen

what we see and don't
split by the simple curve
of cursive, a pencil slip
or determined nitch
on paper. God
Almighty,
we miss epiphany
when we step
our voice too quickly
over the light lines
punctuating the Light
of all that is,
visible and invisible,
our hurried eyes
forgetting to read
what so powerfully pauses
our lives between
the meanings.

Marjorie Maddox

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The Ethics of Self-Sacrifice

John Milbank

If I were to say that the highest imaginable exemplification of the good consists in dying sacrificially on behalf of an other or others, I imagine that many people, religious or otherwise, would concur. And in some recent ethical thinking, this understanding of the highest good has been given a philosophically systematic and rigorous expression. For such thinkers as Jan Patocka, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, and, to a certain extent, Jean-Luc Marion, the highest ethical gesture is a sacrificial self-offering which expects no benefit in return. The good is, paradigmatically, a purified sacrifice, the purest sacrifice imaginable.

Anyone who thinks of this pure self-sacrifice more closely must answer four questions: How is *giving* to be understood? What is the reality of *death*? What is the appropriate concept of the *self*? What are the background *ontological circumstances* against which the sacrificial gesture would be situated?

Recent ethical thinkers have certain characteristic answers to these questions. The only real *gift*, they claim, is one that expects no counter-gift in return. Unless a gift is in this fashion sacrificial—the giving up of something—it is argued, a gift reduces to a hidden contractual agreement, governed by a principle of self-interest; and actions out of self-interest, as Kant pointed out, are not pure gifts.

Secondly, they hold that *death*, far from being complicit with evil as religious traditions have often taken it to be, is the very circumstance that makes it possible to act ethically at all. This claim further breaks down into two complementary parts: 1) We are radically and ultimately vulnerable only because we might die—an immortal would be in the most crucial aspects invulnerable. Hence it is the fact of death alone that lends serious gravity to the ethical demand which vulnerability imposes upon us. 2) At the limit, the ethical agent might die for the vulnerable other person. This readiness to die alone guarantees the ultimate *disinterest* of his ethical gesture, since it would seem that a good one is prepared to die for cannot be the secret vehicle of one's own power or (presently enjoyed) glory. In this sense, readiness to die precludes the will to power.

Thirdly, in the trend of ethical thinking we are investigating, it is characteristically assumed that what makes us aware of the *self* in the first place is just this double intrusion of death: the cry of the vulnerable other eliciting our preparedness to negate our own life. Combine this understanding of self with a common epistemological belief, and we bring God into the picture. The epistemological belief is that when something appears to us, when it is present to our consciousness, we can see only what we understand and are able to grasp; we reduce the "other" to the sphere of our awareness. If this is the case, then for the vulnerability of another to place an ethical demand on us greater than ourselves, the other must be greater than ourselves. Thus, the demand of the other with a small "o" passes mistily over into the claim of the other with a big "O," the demand of transcendence, of deity.

Finally, in the fourth place there is the question of *ontology*, of just what kind of world it is in which gift without return and the death of the other linked to my own death gives rise to subjectivity and ensures that as subjective beings we are first and foremost ethical creatures—even before we are erotic creatures or curious creatures. Recent thought has it that ours is a world in which death, the passing away of life beyond being into nothingness, is an ultimate horizon. It is suggested that only within this horizon does ethics acquire an ultimate seriousness. For if we are all terminally fragile, then our temporary lives assume an ultimate value, since we can offer our own lives for the sake of others. A death without return

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ensures that the choice of the good exceeds any self-interest, and that the good lies, as Levinas says, "beyond being [including our own]." With God reduced to a shadow of the human other, and no longer seen as the source of compensating heavenly rewards, the ultimate religious and ethical imperative of pure sacrifice is therefore fulfilled within a secular and symbolically drained sphere, harboring no illusions. Common to all these thinkers (with the exception of Marion) is an attempt to make nothingness or the continuous disappearance of life into the void the precondition for morality, rather than an obstacle in its path. Death in its unmitigated reality permits the ethical, while the notion of resurrection contaminates it with self-interest.

So is it true that death undergirds ethics? I want to argue against this, instead proposing the opposite position that only with faith in the resurrection is an ethical life possible. However, I believe that recent thinkers are rigorously consistent when they argue that self-sacrifice is supremely good only if death is final and unrewarded. So in exalting resurrection, I will have also to deny that self-sacrifice is most paradigmatic of the good. And this is what I shall now proceed to do, arguing that this idea is incoherent, actually unethical, and not at all a translation of the essence of monotheistic tradition as some tend to claim. To make this argument, I will examine in turn the four components of this ostensibly pure sacrifice: 1) gift without return or "unilateral" gift; 2) death as grounding the ethical; 3) a subjectivity as constituted through sacrifice and the demand of a God beyond being; and 4) ontology without resurrection or eschatological overcoming of death.

The notion that a sacrificial offering without hope of return is the only true gift suggests that to be ethical is to be prepared to lose oneself for the other. This is purported to be an improvement over the ancient Greek idea that to be ethical is to value as the only source of secure happiness that which cannot be taken away from one, such as, for example, a simple, ordered, tranquil life, passed mainly in contemplation and the enjoyment of secure friendship—a life relatively immune to disaster. I want to argue, on the contrary, that both ideas are equally solipsistic. The one thing about ourselves we know with certainty is that we are to die. When we accept this death, or prepare ourselves, if necessary, actively to appropriate it, we fulfill most rigorously the Greek demand to value only that which cannot be taken away from us. We do so, it is true, in a somewhat paradoxical manner; that which most securely defines us—death—is that which puts an end to us, while the moral gesture which supposedly establishes our subjectivity, and so is inalienable, involves our being drawn beyond our own boundaries. Nevertheless, one might suggest that pure self-sacrifice strangely turns out to be the securest self-possession, and so one might wonder whether, after all, there is something stoically solipsistic about this ethic despite its being founded upon a disinterested regard for the other.

Let us reflect further upon these claims about self-sacrifice. It is thought that one can never observe another's subjectivity, but can only glimpse a "trace" of it in his or her pain. It would follow from this notion that one acknowledges the other as other only when one sacrificially responds to that pain. This means that we only acknowledge the reality of the other person, and then negatively, when we can no longer be in communication with him. But a person whom we cannot see or talk with is an unknown and indefinable other, and therefore only a *generalized* other. And here is where the problem sets in.

For a generalized other is a totalized other, an other reduced to ourselves, since we can only imagine it by projecting our own subjectivity upon it. To die for any old invisible other is the very reverse of valuing otherness, because otherness must involve not just diversity and difference but specific diversity and concrete difference. All these things have to be visibly or audibly or in some way sensorially registered.

I am also doubtful about the claim that to gaze upon something is to reduce it to the terms of our understanding or of publicly available linguistic categories. Those who hold this view are the victims of a transcendentalist dimension in phenomenology which, in the tradition of Kant, reduces what appears to that which our understanding can master. It strikes me rather that the very specificity of an object, its very ability to arrest our attention, is constituted by a depth it withholds. We can never see every aspect of a thing, nor know how it would respond in every conceivable circumstance; yet without knowing those responses, we do not know all the different truths they would disclose. If this is true of objects, then it is all the more true of other human subjects. We cannot look at anything, especially not at human beings, without ourselves being regarded in turn from an unknown depth. This depth is not necessarily contrasted with the surface of the thing, since even surfaces tend to exceed our categories: we never feel our words exactly capture a rainbow, for example. So I disagree that what is apparent, what makes itself present, is thereby reduced to what we understand it to be.

We have seen that, in much recent ethical thought, a self-sacrifice is supposed to acknowledge the other through a response to his or her pain, without reducing that other to our understanding of him or her. And yet the effect is actually the opposite—self-sacrifice is that which is most inalienable and so remains within the circle of our self-identity, as does also the generalized other which can only be a projection of our self. On the other hand, we have seen that a person with whom we can interact and whose

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concrete presence we enjoy is able to be genuinely other, and in a positive way, rather than just as a victim or as suffering. In fact, it is only in this positive sense that someone *cannot* be reduced to our self.

So, if attention to the other is central for a sense of the ethical, it would appear that convivial enjoyment of another is more important than suffering on his behalf. Moreover, if a person can only be known as other via communication, then I cannot remove myself as a participant in this situation. The German Roman Catholic philosopher Robert Spaemann has expressed this point very well: giving food to those in need, he observes, can occur as a one-way gift from those who have to those who have not, or it can occur in a feast, where all eat together. In the feast egotism is mitigated, since here one eats only if one eats along with others; and yet at the same time one *does* eat, and so selfhood is not eradicated. This image of the feast suggests for Spaemann that what is supremely good is the ecstatic—not in the sense of departing from life, but in the sense of living life as departing from oneself while in this very departing receiving oneself back again. In other words, beyond the ancient Greek quest for happiness in security, he proposes living convivially through generosity to the other and through receiving back again from the other.

Now all this is of course not to deny that to preserve conviviality, to preserve the spirit of feasting, one may very often have to make one-way gestures, without apparent return. Indeed, one can go further to say that in a corrupt, fallen world, the only way to the recovery of mutual interaction will pass through sacrifice unto death. But the point is that this sacrifice is not in itself the good, but rather that which sustains a road to the good in adverse circumstances. If one values every single individual as unique and irreplaceable, and if one's image of the good is of the widest possible conviviality, then in order fully to aim for the good, even the sacrificial offering of oneself must sustain the hope of one's own ultimate redemption. I myself am unique and irreplaceable; without oneself, as without anyone, the universe would have lost something good.

What I am suggesting here, therefore, is that if the fullness of being, or of convivial interaction, defines our vision of the perfect good, then giving can be conceived as quintessentially reciprocal; expecting a gift in return need not necessarily diminish the gratuity of a gift. But in that case, one might very well protest, what precisely distinguishes a gift from a contract? Does it not make giving into a sort of informal and somewhat self-deceptive contractual arrangement, rather like an exchange of business lunches? Not exactly—giving is more unpredictable. If we sign a contract we know what we will get back and probably when—we also take it that what we receive in return is, according to some public measure, equivalent. But if, for example, at Christmas, we exchange gifts with a friend, although there is reciprocity involved, there is also asymmetry: what we receive in return may often surprise us, and whether it is equivalent will be a matter of fine judgment. Indeed, very many different modes of equivalence might prove acceptable here. Furthermore, a return gift may be for a long time delayed, and we will require no exact guarantee of when it is to be returned—as for example with an invitation to dinner. When such a gift is returned, it will certainly in many ways repeat the initial gift—the same hour of the evening perhaps, the same sitting at a table, the same number of courses. But it will also be repeated non-identically—the menu will be different, at least in our culture. Indeed, if one were invited back to dinner immediately, the very next night, and presented with the same menu, one would be offered not a gift but an insult.

This suggests that the *content* of a gift may as much deem "giftness" as its circumstances (i.e., how free, how unconstrained it is, with what expectations it is given). Modern thinkers, however, tend to concentrate wholly on the formal circumstances of the gift, not on what is given. But suppose a wealthy dying man whom you knew would not live to enjoy a reciprocal invitation invited you to a meal but presented you with only a piece of stale bread and butter. Although the formal circumstances are correct, would you suppose that to be a gift?

My claim here is that asymmetrical reciprocity and non-identical repetition allow sufficiently for an element of freedom in gift exchange to distinguish it from contract. Within limits, at least, the recipient of the initial gift may choose what to give back and when. Certainly, it remains the case that the initial giver and society in general exert pressure on the recipient to give back, in the name of justice. Nevertheless the coercion is mitigated in that if he fails to give back, any punishment he would receive would also fall outside the fixed contractuality of law. For a long time he may be punished with more pressure, more gifts. But eventually the giver will judge that his generosity should be diverted to other, more promising causes, and then the defaulter will finally receive the logical consequence of his refusal: isolation.

At the same time, however, it would be true to say (and I am indebted here to discussion with Jean-Luc Marion) that the very components of non-identity and delay in gift exchange involve a certain surplus of unilateral giving over reciprocity. I do give without the guarantee of return, and if my gift differs from the return gift, then it would seem that something unique has passed from me which does not return. Hence Aquinas insists that gift involves a notion of the unreturnable, even though he also asserts that the ultimate blessedness of charity involves reception as well as giving. However, in the first case of

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the unreturned gift, one could say that there always remains a hope for a reciprocal gesture, as there is in an eschatological reserve: there will always be self-sacrificing in this life, but in hope of the eternal banquet.

In the second case, of giving something which I do receive back but not in the same form, there is an element of unilaterality, but this is connected to the fact that for a gift to remain a gift, it must change throughout its passage. For as soon as something passes into someone else's hands, it is marked by their character, by their usage; it has become something different in a sense, insofar as the gift-giving succeeds in establishing *understanding* between giver and recipient. It follows that a return gift (which may only be that of gratitude) would further unfold a mutual understanding, so although the thing which one receives back is in the most obvious sense different from that which was first given, in a deeper sense the reciprocal gift returns the same gift of mutuality that one had first offered. A gift to remain a gift must continuously alter, and this altering is essential to exchange; but at the same time, without the exchange of gratitude a gift is unrecognized and therefore obliterated in its effective actuality.

So far I have argued that exchanging gifts more enshrines the ethical than does a one-way giving that is indifferent to return. In addition, however, I want to claim that the sheerly unilateral gift is a barely coherent notion. In some sense, at least, the free, one-way gift, although it supposedly defines the good in modern ethical thought, is impossible and cannot occur. For as many have noted, even to have the consciousness of being a giver is to reward oneself for giving and to cancel the gratuity of the gift. We may be genuinely disinterested, but we cannot escape the fact that if this disinterest is for us a value, we shall experience our disinterestedness with satisfaction. Since one would seem to fall prey to the same trap were one even to aspire to giving, it seems hard to understand how aspiring to self-sacrifice is any better. Such aspiration is equivalent to an endless deferral of the gift, except, we are told, at the point where we pass beyond ourselves in death and cannot receive our own death back again. However, the formal circumstances of the sacrificial death are not enough to make a purely one-way gift possible. For the gift to be truly disinterested, the giver of his own life must not be able even to imagine the future pleasure of its recipients.

Therefore the true gift would have to be to an absolutely anonymous other—paradigmatically the enemy, suggests Jean-Luc Marion, echoing the Gospels. In addition—and again to prevent anticipation of the other's satisfaction—the thing given should possess no content outside the gesture of giving itself; otherwise we could be pleased that the recipient will at least possess the content we passed along (e.g., "at least he'll always have his health"). We have already seen, however, that removing the question of the appropriate content of the gift leads to absurd results. Nevertheless, the offering of death would seem to approach most closely to the contentless gift. For example, one might ask: In dying, just what *did* Jesus Christ offer all those infinite numbers of people unknown to him? However, even if one is prepared to offer death for unknown others, this still does not establish a one-way gift. Before dying, the living subject will imagine that *somebody* benefits from his death, and will be reimbursed by the knowledge that his death is significant in some fashion or other. As a result, the giving ethical subject only becomes purely giving, and therefore ethical, once he is dead and has ceased to be a subject at all.

It has been seen then that the first and most crucial component of the notion of pure sacrifice—namely, one-way giving—not only fails to define the ethical, but is also scarcely coherent. And we have already seen how the second component, death as condition for the possibility of morality, fails to grasp the priority of intercommunion in defining the good. But one should note here, in addition, that if the ethical only arises in response to that fragility which *in extremis* is the death of the other, then the ethical is, ontologically speaking, something merely secondary and reactive. Far from it appearing to be the case, as some would wish, that the good lies beyond being, the good would on this construal rather seem to be distinctly less than being. In other words, only when being begins to suffer does it instigate the good.

But here one might suggest that a vision of morality as a reaction to the threat of death is less a transcription of monotheism than a reversion to the heroic morality of Homeric times. Against this morality, Socrates, in Plato's *Phaedo*, insists that warriors who die for the city out of fear for their own death or the death of others in the city, or fear of loss of honor, are sacrificially trading a lesser fear of dying in battle for a greater fear of shame, loss of nobility, and the loss of the city itself. By contrast, says Socrates, the philosopher is a person who begins with absolute confidence, with a vision of eternal truth, goodness, and beauty, and with his own psychic kinship to these abiding forms. For this reason, the philosopher can act positively, truly without fear even unto death (avoiding the merely apparent fearlessness that is in thrall to an even greater fear). He is good, not primarily as acting, but as knowing, or as receiving and recognizing the realm of the forms as that which is most real. No sacrifice is involved here, since the body and lower passions given up are less intense degrees of being, truth, and goodness; the absolute degree of these things includes the reality of the lower, and so nothing is truly lost.

Thus if the good is primary—if as for Platonism and the monotheistic faiths what is, is good—the

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good is not first occasioned by death.

The third component of the notion of pure sacrifice is the idea that subjectivity itself is constituted through the "persecution" of my consciousness by the demands of the vulnerable other. Here again, I have already enunciated my main response: this tends to render the personal impersonal. For if my ethical response to the sorrows of another precedes my exercise of judgment, I respond in the same way to all ostensible sorrows, whether authentic or not, self-indulgent or not, self-caused or not. I would have no means of knowing whether this persecution was in fact simply a confidence trick on the part of others, universally pretending sorrow in order to win power over me. If, by contrast, one is to respond to real historical persons, then one must first distinguish the legitimacy of their claims, the specificity of their needs. This being said, it goes without saying that to regard God as a big Other shadowing the small human other is simply to make an idol out of generalized and drained subjectivity. Since God is not just another person, but the fullness of personhood and being in whom we participate, He is as much not-other—*non aliud* as Nicholas of Cusa put it—as other.

This leads naturally to the fourth and final component of the idea of pure sacrifice: the ontological vision which sees Being without immortality of the soul or resurrection of the body. Only this vision, according to our modern thinkers (though not, of course, the Catholic Marion), ensures that the Jewish and Christian imperative to self-sacrifice can enjoy a purified fulfillment.

What the modern presentation of this ontology tends to overlook, however, is its profound link both to the antique pagan polis and to the modern secular state. We need to comprehend the first link if we are to understand something of the process by which sacrifice was displaced from an actual bloody ritual practice to a metaphor for moral action, such that we can now say "he was very self-sacrificial" and not mean "he offered his body to Aztec priests." What, in part, assisted the transition to metaphor was the way in which the death of the hero for the city came to be construed by the Greeks and the Romans as equivalent to ritual sacrifice, and indeed as rendering the hero himself a fit recipient of sacrifices in turn.

There is a notion here that the hero's life is subsumed in a greater social whole, losing himself without return except for posthumous praise or the celebration of his bravery. The Greeks did not believe the hero continued to live, save in the rather shadowy intimations of an afterlife in Hades. But modern secularity gets rid of even such intimations, and so perfects this pagan logic of sacrificial obliteration of oneself for some ideal, or for the State, or for both. Such a logic elevates as supreme the abstract notion of the perpetually abiding nation-state, outlasting its citizens and being more valued than the lives of individual humans. Sometimes this last aspect is disguised in the form of a "sacrifice for future generations," but since *every* generation should logically be subject to the same imperative to sacrifice for future generations, in no generation will the people benefit from the sacrifices of those before. Consummation of the sacrifice, then, is forever postponed.

To espouse these values is essentially to perpetuate the positivist exaltation of "altruism," of surrender of self for the future, for science, for the state. If the ethical imperative is that we should offer our lives to an other who is present to us only as a trace (as a sufferer, as we said above) and not in visibility, then, as I have shown, this other is an anonymous and therefore generalized other. Thus we live under the ethical sway of a law of abstract otherness, mirroring in the ethical realm the legal assumptions of the modern liberal state, which enjoins a merely abstract respect for the rights of the individual in general with indifference to that individual's gender, character, or cultural specificity.

Given the assumptions of such a state two things follow: our responsibilities tend to become unlimited because we owe our lives infinitely to every other person; and the ethical good never arrives—we can never fulfil this impossible responsibility, and no one could ever legitimately relax and enjoy the benefits of the sacrifices of others. Thus the only thing that is achieved is the continued carrying out of self-obliteration. Liberals pretend that continuous self-obliteration is the demand of the moral law, but in reality it is only the demand of the liberal state, which cannot put a brake upon sacrifice because it is unable to promote any positive goals or values that would define true humanity. It follows that the exaltation of pure self-sacrifice for the other is secretly the sacrifice of all individuals to the impersonality of the formal procedural law of state and marketplace. Like the antique polis, this alone abides, this alone is eternal.

Within the ethical thinking regarding pure sacrifice that I am opposing, one's decision to be responsible for this person rather than that appears to be entirely arbitrary. As Derrida puts it, Why look after *this* cat rather than all the other stray cats? However, he is surely overlooking here the limitations of liberal politics: if to be good was not, as for liberalism, to exercise a generalized responsibility, but rather, as for antiquity and the Middle Ages, to perform excellently a particular social role which helps to achieve, in coordination with other performed roles, a specific concrete social telos or end, then I can look after the cat assigned to me in the secure knowledge that other people are looking after theirs. Moreover, if this telos is taken as reflecting a transcendent reality, then the individual carrying out his role provides insight into this transcendent that others can learn from.

We can see from this that while, on the one hand, the logic of pure sacrifice upholds the law of an im-

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personal collectivity, on the other hand it is too individualistic and has no account of the good as achievable through coordination. For modern ethical thinkers, indeed, the tension is resolved only through death, when at last that which I alone can responsibly take on—my own death—is also recognizable as fulfilling the law of public responsibility. But this is only because, as we have seen, in fully possessing myself in death, I pass beyond myself into public, impersonal indifference. By contrast, if we allow for a good achievable through coordination, it is possible to exalt not just self-offering, but even a joyful attention to the infinite presence of a living, visible other above the social whole.

We may be confident that a society based on such coordination would be made up of an infinite series of joyful relations to each other. But that is to say that to carry out the ethical project requires a community collectively aspiring to enact charity. One needs to realize here that before early modernity, when it was reduced from a moral imperative to a private task of one-way giving, charity in the Middle Ages was a reciprocal state of being that persons had to enter into with *familiar* others, with adopted kin under God, and with friends with whom they were conjoined in a common purpose. Charity was not something for me, privately, to perform, but an entire network of complex reciprocity.

Of course, even a community aspiring to this would be utterly riven by fractures and failures. Much of the time one would be conscious that others were failing to perform their role, and failing to exert any sort of charitable preference. And often, indeed, failures of some would require sacrifices from others, even unto death. But it is at this point that faith in resurrection doubly sustains the project of a charitable society, founded on the widest extension of reciprocity. First of all, because of this faith, one can have hope for the victims of the failures of others; and secondly, in the case of necessary self-sacrifice, one need not surrender oneself to the consuming totality. In either case, one need not embrace the logic of ultimately *necessary* self-sacrifice without return, either of others or of oneself. If this is true, then only the vision of the eschatological banquet could be an image of the good, whereas the image of dying for the other—though it is the advent of the good in fallen time—cannot itself be the final good, without once more subordinating the person to an impersonal totality, in this case an abstract moral principle.

If, as in this modern ethical vision, there is no resurrected return, then we have to accept that there will be, eventually, nothing more to be said to anyone. But that means that towards all those we have harmed and wounded and then lost without reconciliation, we can only rehearse an empty gesture of private, nominal apology. They can never appear to forgive us, just as those who have injured us and vanished can never appear to be forgiven.

Without resurrection, there can never be any final reconciliation. But in the absence of reconciliation, or of hope for that, neither can there be any morality. For where I cannot be reconciled with the lost one I have injured, I owe him an infinite debt of mourning and regret. So great a debt do I in fact owe, that my energies cannot legitimately be freed up to perform my duties towards the living. But those demands of the living also are infinite and infinitely legitimate, and so, here indeed, without resurrection arises an irresolvable problem: I should not cease mourning and apologizing, and yet I should. Only the hope for an infinite community of all who have ever lived frees us from this dilemma, again to do good.

And so we must finally conclude that resurrection, not death, is the ground of the ethical. They are wrong who claim that in Luke's Gospel a promise of eternal reward contaminates an injunction to unilateral giving. A wider reading of the New Testament, especially John and Paul, suggests that such injunctions are only a moment of eschatological delay within a wider promotion of gift-exchange beyond the fetishized limits upon such exchange imposed by most ancient societies. The name of the Holy Spirit himself as "gift" is after all bestowed not only to denote a pure one-way gratuity, but also because the Spirit expresses the infinitely realized exchange between Father and Son. And if to be resurrected is to be bodily incorporated into the life of the Trinity, resurrection is not an extrinsically added reward for successfully giving without return. Rather, for the Christian, to give is itself to enter into reciprocity and the hope for infinite reciprocity. And to offer oneself, if necessary, unto sacrificial death is already to receive back one's body from beyond the grave. To give, to be good, is already to be resurrected. FT

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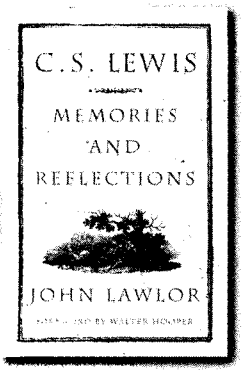

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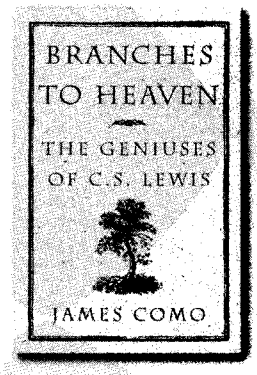

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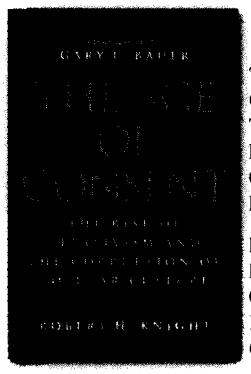

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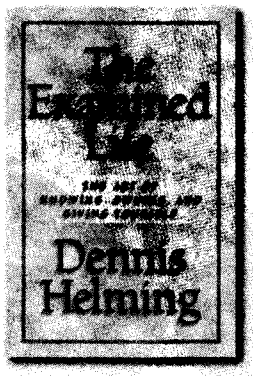

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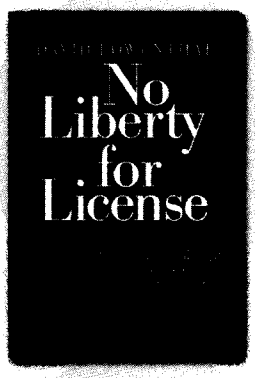

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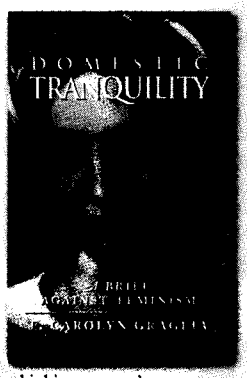

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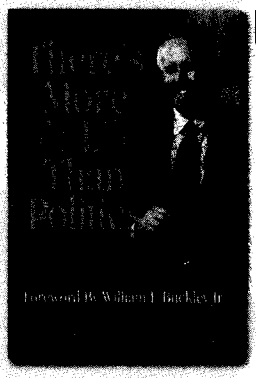

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Books In Review

Texts Have Consequences

ANCIENT CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON SCRIPTURE—NEW TESTAMENT II: MARK. Edited by THOMAS C. ODEN and CHRISTOPHER A. HALL. *InterVarsity. 317 pp. $39.99.*

ANCIENT CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON SCRIPTURE—NEW TESTAMENT VI: ROMANS. Edited by GERALD BRAY. *InterVarsity. 400 pp. $39.99.*

READING SCRIPTURE WITH THE CHURCH FATHERS. By CHRISTOPHER A. HALL. *InterVarsity. 225 pp. $12.99 paper.*

Reviewed by
Robin Darling Young

FEW OBSERVERS WOULD contest that the exegesis of the Bible has now fully entered a postcritical moment. The rules of the venerable historical-critical method no longer reign supreme, even in the academy. Readers lay and scholarly recognize that the text of the Scriptures is polyvalent and multicontextual, and that communities of readers to some extent determine its meaning.

Several factors have led to this development, including at least the following: the wide availability of varying, sometimes disagreeing (and even disagreeable) translations of the Bible and the consequent sense that the meaning of Scripture is (somewhat) elastic; the manifest futility of much professional biblical interpretation; the collapse of "classical Christian" theology, which in Protestantism depended upon a largely fixed (and nonallegorical) biblical interpretation; the slow-burning fuse of *ressourcement* theology among Catholics and a similar patristic revival among Orthodox Christians; and a renewed interest in the Bible—if only as a hall of mirrors—among many post-Christians and a- or anti-religious literary theorists. To this list should be added the constant, but again fashionable, study of ancient Jewish interpretation, and a general interest in spirituality and mysticism, much of it anchored in Scripture.

ROBIN DARLING YOUNG *is Associate Professor of Theology at the Catholic University of America, where she teaches early Christian history.*

THE PERENNIAL NEEDS of Christian churches, combined with postcritical thought, have produced a new appreciation of early Christian biblical interpretation. Scholars of early Christian theology, or "patristic literature" for those who acknowledge the authority or cogency of the "fathers of the Church," have for centuries been translating biblical exegesis as part of their effort to understand the development of doctrine. Theirs was a work of historical-theological scholarship traditionally carried out in the service of the Church and its academies. Although until recently there was no organized effort to translate exegetical works as such, it has long been recognized that biblical interpretation is the foundation of early Christian theology, and that ancient doctrinal formulations depended heavily upon the results of that interpretation. As long as Christian theology is anchored in its normative tradition—i.e., seeks a continuity with credal and magisterial orthodoxy—it needs the study of early Christian thought in order to apprehend the origins of its understanding of God, Christ, humankind, the cosmic *telos*, and so forth.

The translations of early exegetical texts have become the basis of several new attempts to provide patristic interpretation to a wide audience. The *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (hereafter, *ACCS*) is one such. There are others in print already, and more are on the way. As participant in one such series of volumes, a series that could be regarded as a rival to *ACCS*, I am obligated to disclose, worse than partisanship alone, significant doubts about the absolute value of any of them.

ACCS HAS BEGUN AMBITIOUSLY. Its general editor, Thomas C. Oden, professor of systematic theology at Drew University Divinity School, plans to compile a commentary on the entire Bible in twenty-five volumes. In 1998 Oden oversaw the publication of two volumes—one on Romans and one on Mark which he himself coedited—and a general introduction to the series, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers.* The latter volume, written by Christopher A. Hall, is worth some attention because it sketches the series' general purpose and gives an indication of its intended audience.

Hall begins by asking why anyone should bother to read the church fathers. The answer he offers is twofold: 1) because these ancient Christians show us "how to read the Bible well and to apply its riches to a variety of needs, issues, and circumstances"; and 2) "all the fathers insist that the study of the Bible is not an esoteric, intellectual exercise practiced by the isolated academic."

Such an approach indicates that Hall is writing for an evangelical audience, one for whom the fathers do not have an authority based on their formation of the continuous tradition of magisterial teaching. It also shows that the interest of the series is practical or pastoral: it emphasizes the application of Scripture to particular Christian situations. It holds that patristic exegesis does not fall prey to the ills of contemporary biblical scholarship, but "is a communal act rather than a private, individualistic endeavor."

This portrait is wrongheaded on two counts. First, it is combative, as demonstrated by the subsequent chapters of Hall's book, which attack modern biblical criticism and modern Western thought generally. But worse, it manifests the intellectual and spiritual vice of nostalgia. This is unfortunately a besetting

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sin among many (including nonevangelical) Christians, and it is based on the delusion that a former age, usually the age of primitive Christianity, was far superior to all subsequent ones, perhaps most especially the one now experienced. From such a vice, fantasy, not history—and certainly not prudent exegesis—is born.

IRONICALLY, THIS VICE is not to be found in the originator of *ressourcement*, Henri de Lubac. That Jesuit scholar and theologian, trained in the Thomism of the early twentieth century, realized that attention to the exegesis and theology of the early church would serve to ready Catholic theology—and by extension all Christian theology—to encounter honestly the problems posed by contemporary thought and life. Another adherent of *ressourcement*, the ex-Jesuit Hans Urs von Balthasar, likewise recognized certain themes in the thought of the patristic period that aided in the reconstruction of a Catholic theology engaged in the intellectual projects of the twentieth century, including its new but inevitable encounter with other religions and with religious pluralism. Both of these great intellectuals, creative geniuses in their own right, had enormous respect for the learning and studious reflection that formed the foundation of the ecclesiastical exegesis of the fathers. But they were not nostalgic, and they did not approach the work of the fathers looking for shelter or refuge. Nor did they succumb to the illusion that the fathers of the Church spoke with one voice or that they should have the last word—a nostalgic delusion that the fathers themselves would vehemently have rejected.

The old temptation to concoct a single mind of the fathers, who are then made to speak in a convenient chorus, is implausible on historical grounds—as any straightforward reading will show—and it is also unhelpful in the practice of Christian life and learning. The legitimate authority of the fathers is based on other grounds: their witness to the early apostolic tradition and their proximity, therefore, to the person of Jesus; the continuity between their exegesis and that of the New Testament authors; their understanding of the requirements of a Christian *politeia* inherently restless until the establishment of the kingdom of God; their participation in the formation of ecumenical conciliar decisions and hence their continuous presence in the ongoing ecclesiastical tradition. In addition, some of the fathers deserve attention sheerly for their stature as thinkers within the Christian tradition; these are the ones, like Augustine, who attract attention from outside the Christian community. Finally, many are saints, and have the authority intrinsic to great holiness.

The *vox patrum* ("voice of the fathers") was surely a theological and magisterial category already at the end of the fourth century; but with the development of the tradition since then, its status has changed. The attempt by de Lubac and others to recover the insights of the fathers has been based on the armory of modern critical scholarship developed since the Renaissance, though some in this movement were motivated as well by the nostalgia fostered by the Reformers. The modern discipline of patristics has thus tilted either toward the critical or toward the authoritative; but the patristic scholarship most useful for the honest life of the Church has been firmly based in critical text-scholarship, i.e., in reading of sources by means of the exercise of reason under the aegis of Christian faith.

Hall's book tries to bridge our distance from the exegesis of the fathers by examining modern interpretation and then surveying early Christian interpretation. In such a short volume it would have been impossible to manage a significant survey of the causes and methods of either kind of interpretation. Hall's approach gives us black hats—the faithless modern interpreters—and white hats—those patristic authors of East and West whom the Catholic Church considers *doctores ecclesiae*, and whom he likes because they "are united in their insistence that the text of Scripture opens itself to those who approach it reverently and receptively."

THE FINAL CHAPTER, "Making Sense of Patristic Exegesis," lays out Hall's program, and presumably that of the *ACCS*, for the reform of modern Protestantism by attention to patristic interpretation. After a prelimary apology for tradition as such, Hall says that Protestant appropriation of patristic exegesis will cause Scripture to be read "holistically," "Christologically," and "within the practice of prayer, worship, and spiritual formation." This list is worthy enough, but surely cannot stand alone; in fact, it lands interpretation right back in the arms of the demon of "individualistic interpretation" unless the reading community is linked with communal authority of some kind. Furthermore, reading Scripture Christologically was one of Schleiermacher's successes; it must be read in a Trinitarian manner as well.

ACCS attempts to form a community by creating a "Christian Talmud" (in the words of Hall) out of the various writings of early Christianity. This is a dubious aim, and possibly a misunderstanding of the Talmud. The Talmud is a Jewish instrument to perpetuate the teachings of the Amoraim of the Palestinian and Babylonian Jewish communities down to the fifth century A.D. It represents a kind of scholastic commentary on a summary of the Torah according to six divisions, and its primary object is to create a normative law code for Jews in the Diaspora after the fall of Jerusalem, although it includes a great deal of *aggadic* (i.e., narrative and theological) material as well.

In fact, there *was* no "Christian Talmud," and how contemporary Christian communities—Protestant, Orthodox, or Catholic—would make use of one is an inscrutable question. Rather, what Oden and Hall give us in the com-

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mentary on Mark which they co-edited, or what Gerald Bray yields in his commentary on Romans, is an assemblage of short snippets of writing from the wide array of early Christian thought (Gnostics excepted) that relates, as almost all of it does, to the biblical text.

The problem with such a collection is that it creates a document that never existed. There was no patristic Talmud, for reasons internal to the differences between ancient Judaism and Christianity. The closest parallel to the *ACCS* by genre, the *catena*, was a "chain" or compilation of biblical interpretations taken from different authors and organized by subject from specifically exegetical works, either homilies or formal commentaries. The *catenae* of early and medieval Christianity differed from the project of the *ACCS* in important ways. First, they had a principle of organization not evident in the *ACCS*; in addition, they served a primarily scholarly and secondarily homiletic purpose, not the meliorative purpose that the *ACCS* has. Their aim was more like that of the reference or mnemonic aid, the florilegium (or, later, the footnote).

An additional problem with the organization of *ACCS* is that it begins with the Gospel of Mark, a book on which there was only one full commentary in the early Church. Presumably the theoretically historical priority of Mark had some bearing upon its choice to lead the series. To assemble a "patristic commentary" on this Gospel, the editors had to find references in commentaries on other works, precisely because early Christian authors, almost without exception, read the entire gospel story harmonistically or at least synoptically. With this method, Mark, not distinguished for its theological insight, usually fell by the wayside.

THE OVERARCHING PROBLEM with the *ACCS*, a problem probably not solely attaching to that series, is that it seeks a univocal patristic interpretation of the Bible that never existed. According to Hall's introduction, the editors of the series seek to represent an interpretation which the early church "consensually concluded" about one or another text. This is idealism with a vengeance: any student of early Christianity knows that while consensus was what the emperor Constantine wanted, what he actually got was continuous argumentation.

If the principle of organization is flawed, and the goal is a chimera, what can be said in favor of this series? First, it is attractively presented. The volumes are nicely printed, and their aim is not too subtle for the average reader to comprehend. There are adequate bibliographies,

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so that those interested in a wider sampling of patristic interpretation can work backwards to find the entire text, for which existing translations were used in most cases. Furthermore, the *ACCS* introduces patristic thought to an audience, evangelical Protestants, generally unfamiliar with it.

The devotion of the general editor, and the amount of work that he and his assistants undertook to produce just these first three volumes of the series, is impressive. Readers may find this work and its method detailed in the general introduction and in the appendix to *Mark*. Those who have no other access to patristic interpretation will thank the contributors for their labors. Those who are engaged in the endeavor for other series will want to think about how best to provide an honest and sober presentation of patristic thought in its irascible variety as well as in its moments of occasional concord. All will want to remember that the great architects of patristic interpretation—Origen of Alexandria and Theodore of Mopsuestia, respectively symbolic interpreter and narrative interpreter par excellence—were condemned by the consensus-seeking emperor Justinian in a council of 553.

The same authors who seem to uphold the tradition best by their biblical interpretation, in other words, also call into question that very consensus which seems so comforting in a postmodern moment, but which in actuality never existed. The confirmation of that fact can be found in the plurality of churches which in antiquity and in the late Middle Ages split off from each other, in part due to their contrary ways of interpreting Scripture.

In the face of this situation, what purpose can be served by a revival of interest in patristic exegesis? Particular Christian communities may contrast the approach of the ancients to their own, and learn from the encounter, acquiring the healthy relativizing of one's self-understanding that benefits any human community. And since the fathers of the Church were unafraid to speculate about the religious meaning of the Scriptures, they may help contemporary Christians feel the courage to do the same. In an age where unbelief always knocks at the church door, the fathers' awareness that texts have consequences can be salutary in many ways.

The Sexual Counterrevolution

A RETURN TO MODESTY: DISCOVERING THE LOST VIRTUE. By WENDY SHALIT. *Free Press. 304 pp. $24.*

Reviewed by **Sarah E. Hinlicky**

DESPITE ITS MODEST TITLE, this book is a bombshell. In a manner both courageous and passionate, Wendy Shalit challenges the bored, desensitized masses of American women to use their female intuition in finding a way out of the emotional wilderness created by the sexual revolution. And Shalit leaves the reader with no doubts: they need to find a way out.

Exhibit A of this need is Shalit's description of end-of-the-century American mating rituals. First there's the hook-up. That's where young men and women gather in some communal territory, like a frat house or bar, medicate themselves with liquor, and then engage in any range of sexual activities, oblivious to all factors beyond momentary attraction. The next stage is the dumping: the male disentangles himself from the perceived "clinginess" of the female's attempt at emotional involvement. The final stage is the check-up, in which the thoughtful male makes sure that the dumped female is still in

SARAH E. HINLICKY *is an Editorial Assistant at* FIRST THINGS.

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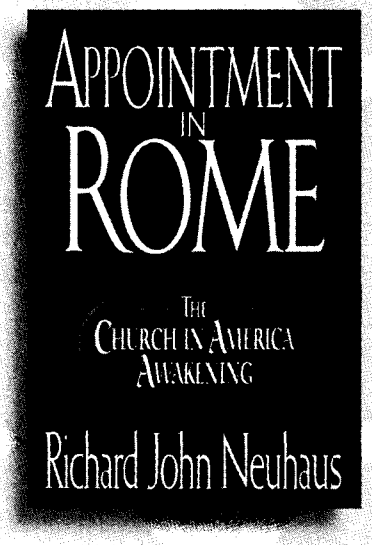

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fairly good health and, if he is especially enlightened, offers her the chance to talk about "what went wrong." This three-tiered process is what is known as "having a relationship." Get used to it or get out.

The problem is, not surprisingly, that women are miserable. Shalit has little use for the contingent of conservatives who claim that the misery is a big female hoax and remind us that, after all, "boys will be boys." At the same time, she is equally dismissive of feminists, many of whose ideas, she believes, are responsible for the unhappiness of female lives. The plain truth of the matter is that somewhere along the line this romance thing went terribly awry, and it's making a train wreck of young women's lives. Appalling numbers of girls today are starving themselves, bingeing and purging, mutilating their bodies, throwing their hearts away on careless cads, suppressing their natural desire for romance, and denying their need for family and children. And when they can't cope with the rotten regime, they dope themselves up on Prozac. Women have become the world's greatest woman-haters, having learned to shun all things feminine.

SHALIT WANTS WOMEN to be women again. She sees the deep perversity of the "androgyny project" of the past thirty years that demands manhood of women and a diminution of manhood among men, but refuses to tolerate womanhood in women. It is anything but a liberation from old shackles: instead, it is a suppression of femininity, a direct

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Neal Plantinga

Ph.D. *magna cum laude* from Princeton; author of *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be* (William B. Eerdmans, 1995), winner of the Book of the Year Award from *Christianity Today*; awarded Woodrow Wilson Fellowship and Yale University Fellowship; winner of Los Angeles Preaching Prize; Dean of the Chapel at Calvin.

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Most bookstores carry an impressive list of new titles on enlightened management styles and effective leadership practices. Many of the manuals lean on the ancient and timeless wisdom of the Bible's view of artful leadership. The person who wishes to be the leader of all, the Scriptures advise, must first be the servant of all.

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assault on the oft-touted blessing of diversity. But now a counterrevolution has begun, not one that chains women to the stove and takes away their right to vote, but one that allows and even encourages the natural and complementary differences between the sexes.

This is a handbook for the counterrevolution, and every woman who wants to be herself again needs to get her hands on it. Shalit's solution is modesty, the much-maligned virtue that was ditched years ago along with corsets and girdles. Her playful, engaging exploration of the richly nuanced concept of modesty is extensively researched and amply supported by evidence drawn from sources as diverse as last year's *Glamour* and last millennium's Talmud. What she finds is not stuffy puritanism that wants to spoil everybody's good fun, but in fact just the opposite: a subtle, exciting, sexy social arrangement in which men are men, women are women, and both get the maximal benefit from it.

Modesty is a quality inherent in girls, Shalit argues. It is their infinite capacity for embarrassment, for blushing, for shyness, for refusing praise. The fact is, it's so natural that it has to be deliberately bred out of girls—bred out by the sorts of adults who are compelled to destroy the mysteries against which their own immorality has innoculated them—by the debased tactics of sex ed, fashion slavery, and *Melrose Place*. Girls without modesty are not gleefully liberated sex kittens, however. They are women who have no idea how to protect their own undeniable womanliness. The destruction of modesty is a hateful project: "[I]t is precisely denying a woman's special vulnerability and stripping her of her natural way of compensating for it that is the height of true misogyny," Shalit observes.

MODESTY IS WOMAN'S natural defense when it is respected by society. In fact, grumpy-feminist types will be shocked to learn, it once served as the great equalizer between men and women, not as the backbone of domination. (Shalit presents convincing evidence that modesty was encouraged in part because it was believed that women liked sex *too* much, and they would get themselves into endless trouble if they didn't learn early on to exercise some restraint.) Modesty gave women the right to withhold themselves from men with dishonorable intentions, and in turn forced men to make themselves worthy of the women they desired. True modesty wisely takes account of the inescapable differences between men and women in order to protect them both. "Encouraged to act immodestly," Shalit notes by contrast, "a woman exposes her vulnerabili-

Judgment Day at the White House

A Critical Declaration Exploring Moral Issues and the Political Use and Abuse of Religion

EDITED BY Gabriel Fackre

"Politically, the president may survive his time on the cross," Kenneth Woodward writes in *Newsweek,* but many leading religious thinkers "still doubt his spiritual sincerity." Seeing the current crisis in the White House as a critical moment in the life of our nation, more than 140 scholars of religion and public life have penned the "Declaration concerning Religion, Ethics, and the Crisis in the Clinton Presidency," a statement meant to bring clarity to the moral confusion caused by the presidential scandal.

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ty and she then *becomes*, in fact, the weaker sex." In that case, women are victimized while men become predators, as our current disastrous state of gender wars demonstrates.

In a nutshell, modesty brings out the best in everyone. Modest women, Shalit says, "live in a way that makes womanliness more a transcendent, implicit quality than a crude, explicit quality." Womanliness enhanced by modesty becomes as intriguing as the Sphinx, in which a Mona Lisa smile far outshines a silicone-enhanced D-cup. In turn, this has serious—and positive—implications for male character. Female modesty elicits a reciprocal response from men, enticing them to become gentlemen, behave honorably, and develop the manly virtues deserving of a woman's body and soul, especially chastity, protectiveness, and gentleness.

All of this talk of modesty may sound unhelpfully vague, and Shalit never hones in on one strict definition of it. But rather than being a flaw, this is the great strength of her argument, one that permits all kinds of women in all kinds of situations to appreciate the value of what she is saying. Shalit herself is quite taken with religious expressions of modesty, especially the Jewish modesty laws. Altogether, though, her advocacy of external modesty—especially in dress—is the logical corollary of an internalized ethic of sexual restraint. Hence the very sensible connection between sexual modesty as a social virtue and sexual morality as a religious one.

Her powerful insight is that modesty is ultimately more erotic than licentiousness. Men are more excited, she suggests, by the twinkling eyes behind the veil and the slender ankle peeking out from the long skirt than they are by casually exposed body parts and effortless conquests in the sack. The most telling example of this is her comparison (complete with photographs) of turn-of-the-century women lounging on the beach in their terribly demure bathing suits and positively wicked grins, with the dull, distracted expressions of dutifully unrepressed nudists on *their* beach. Mischievous and modest; bored and bare. Something more than meets the eye is at work here. Shalit wants the rules back because, without the rules, the unruly, the scandalous, the exciting, and the erotic all disappear into thin air.

THERE HAVE BEEN some modest heroines and heroes, of course, who have maintained the ideals of chastity even through the sexual revolution, but that is not enough anymore, Shalit argues. It is impossible for society to be indifferent to the varying choices of women, and it is always going to prefer one kind of choice to another. At the present time, the "survival value," as she calls it, of immodesty and sexual immorality is so high that few women have the strength—or even the option—to combat it. And so her answer is to become a counter-revolutionary, to reinstate the "cartel of virtue" among women. That is the only way to bring the gentleman back on the scene in society—when it is only through honor, decency, a flair for romance, and a commitment to everlasting love that men can earn the right to share a woman's bed. Call it unfair, but the initiative belongs with women once again. Shalit has no illusions: "If women want the men to be good, they have to want to be good too."

Let the prudes and the libertines step aside, then. Shalit has hit upon the most exciting truth to come out of the whole sexual revolution: "Modesty is the proof that morality is sexy."

The Slowness of the Good

PATIENCE: HOW WE WAIT UPON THE WORLD. By DAVID BAILY HARNED. *Cowley. 191 pp. $12.95.*

***Reviewed by* Gilbert Meilaender**

OVER THE PAST several decades both philosophers and theologians within the academy have participated in a revival of interest in what is generally called "virtue ethics"—an ethic that focuses not so much upon what we ought to do, but upon character, upon the sort of persons we ought to be. Interest in the topic of virtue has also been evident in our culture at large—as evidenced, for example, in the popularity of William Bennett's *Book of Virtues* and the various spin-offs from that project. None of this, however, has really translated into serious, sustained discussion of particular virtues. The academicians seldom get beyond method to actual substance. The popular discussions are a little too concerned with practical results to engage in the kind of leisurely rumination that moral reflection at a certain level requires.

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GILBERT MEILAENDER *holds the Board of Directors Chair in Theological Ethics at Valparaiso University.*

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An Ecumenical Dialogue on the Papal Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (That All May Be One)

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Ut Unum Sint *in Ecumenical Perspective*

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11:00 a.m. **Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky**
Orthodoxy, the Two Vatican Councils, and the Papacy
2:00 p.m. **Bp. Stephen Sykes**
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3:00 p.m. **Dr. David Yeago**
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by David Baily Harned is both welcome and unusual. Most of us, if asked to write two hundred pages about the topic of patience, might quickly become impatient with such a request. Harned has done it, however, in a beautifully written book that probably needs to be read and pondered rather than summarized. His project is self-consciously one of retrieval. "By and large, a rich and complex idea [i.e., the virtue of patience] that was consistently employed for almost two thousand years to represent the highest possibilities of human life, both in the classical and the Christian traditions, has been allowed to wither away." Puzzling as this may be, the way to deal with it is to show the significance of patience for life.

Harned attempts this chiefly through a series of chapters that take up various thinkers who considered patience important enough to reflect upon and write about. Arranged chronologically, these chapters are not, though, primarily historical in character. They are an attempt to think about the structure of patience, instructed by those who have gone before us. Thus, a reader is led from thinking about the patience of God as displayed in the Bible . . . to early Christian thought as displayed in Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine . . . to the characteristically medieval emphases of Gregory the Great, Aquinas, and Thomas à Kempis . . . and finally to Calvin, Jeremiah Burroughs, and Kierkegaard —men who, though quite separated in time, represent perspectives shaped by the Reformation. Drawing on these chapters Harned then characterizes a fourfold shape of patience: as endurance (suffering without discontent), forbearance (bearing with the faults of others), expectancy (a willingness to wait), and perseverance (constancy). We can understand the virtue better by considering its "adversaries," which are also fourfold: impatience and apathy (the extremes of which patience is the mean), boredom, and displacement (loss of touch with one's purpose in life).

BEFORE EVEN BEGINNING this journey through the history of reflection upon patience, Harned considers "the loss of patience" in our time. Why is it that what was once an important virtue has dropped from sight, "seen either as an anachronism or as a notion devised by oppressors to contain the restlessness and discontent of the oppressed"? He suggests several reasons. We have, for example, come to regard waiting as "accidental" in life. We do not think of waiting as occupying a place "at the core and center of human life." In the world as we want it to be, there should really be no waiting at all. In addition, we are unable to see waiting as "doing anything." What counts in life is "activity, agency, getting things done." Such a world, in which we have difficulty receiving anything as a gift, is a profoundly un-Christian world. For "does not Christianity mean, first of all, the acceptance of gifts?" Perhaps, indeed, patience could be a virtue only within a world such as that depicted by the Christian story: "the disclosure of God's nature in his mighty acts, the obedience of Christ, and the reciprocity and responsiveness that life in community involves."

Indeed, on Harned's account, the heart of the biblical story is God's patience. Thus, Jonah's dissatisfaction with the Lord is funny precisely because he holds against God the well-known fact of his patience with evildoers. Jonah loses sight of the fact that this God is one "who never crowds or hurries the creatures he has made." To be sure, Christians are by no means the only ones who have appreciated the importance of the virtue of patience. At several places in his discussion Harned notes how significant patience has been in the Stoic tradition, and, indeed, how that tradition influenced early Christian thinkers. At the same time, however, he observes quite acutely the sense in which Christian patience is, finally, quite different from the passionless *apatheia* of the Stoic sage. "One tradition celebrates the love that inspires patience, and the

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other patience that has conquered love." Nor could that Stoic patience that had "conquered love" really wait with anticipation for what was yet to come.

Throughout the book one comes upon observations that invite us to pause, reflect, and see the relevance of patience to everyday life. "How could we hold the simplest conversation if we were not willing to wait for the other to speak?" Patience is, therefore, absolutely essential in a family, which is "a potential structure of destruction if patience is not present in the house." Hence, Harned suggests, it is significant that in the Bible the relation between Creator and creatures is depicted as one of Father and children. "At the heart and center of this relationship is God's patience, his lovingkindness and long-sufferingness and forbearance." But, in fact, the mystery and centrality of patience go even further into the being of God. "The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that the status of patient is essential to the perfection of divine activity." At the heart of the divine life is a companionship in which each must wait upon the other.

IF PATIENCE is this foundational in life, we had better be reminded that "[t]he root meaning of patience is suffering." We must, of necessity, wait upon one another, "suffer" each other's action in various ways. Because our lives are not simply our own, because our very person is shaped by the words and deeds of others, because so much of our action is responsive, patience is essential. Whether we notice or not, our life will be response to others. What patience makes possible is attentive responsiveness, gratitude for the fact that we "suffer" the attentions of others; for without such attention we cannot be at all. In a world in which we inevitably suffer from illness and disease, in which many fear that they will also suffer from the technological expertise of their caregivers, and in which some therefore seek death on their own terms and at a time of their own choosing, it is good to be reminded that affliction by itself does not necessarily produce good character. We must bring the virtue of patience to our sufferings if they are to do us any good.

I am less clear precisely how Harned wants both to affirm the unity of the virtues—that we can have none of them apart from the others—while at the same time claiming that patience can sometimes be a vice. We can understand, of course, what the latter claim might mean. It seems as if patience can be put in service of evil ends. I can very "patiently" plot revenge upon an old adversary. And certainly Harned is right to note that there may be times—when others, rather than we, suffer—that we should be "impatient" on their behalf. Still, in the first case, "patience" in the service of evil or ignoble ends, one might argue that this is not true "patience" at all. And in the second case, "patience" when others suffer, one might say that "patience" simply has to take on a strange and alien form. Harned prefers to say that patience can sometimes be a vice and impatience a virtue, and perhaps that move has, at least, the virtue of sticking quite close to our ordinary moral intuitions.

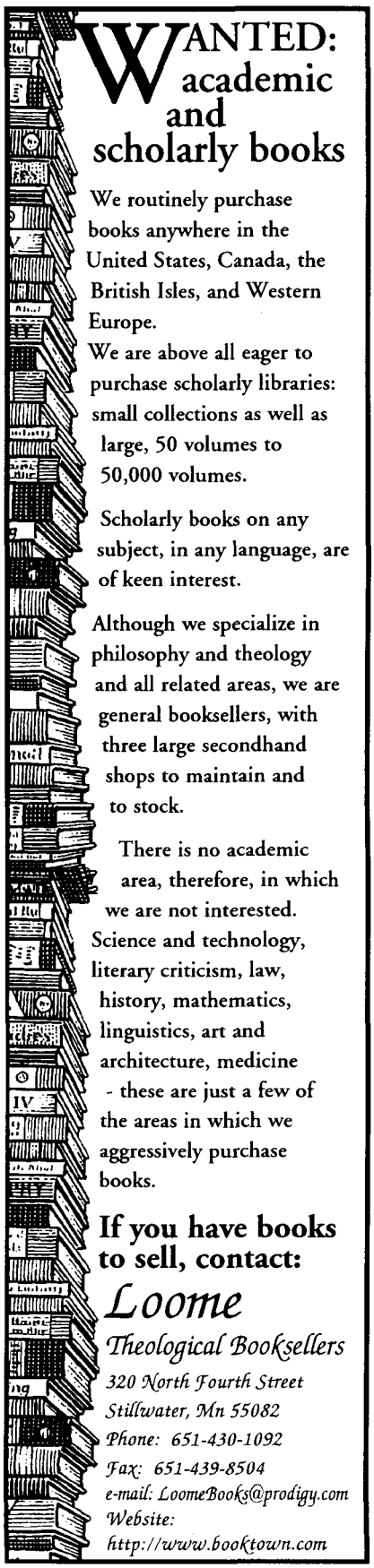
This is, I repeat, less a book to be summarized than to be read and contemplated. Precisely as a specimen of "virtue ethics," it gives relatively little direct guidance about what we ought to do. But it may inspire fresh thought about the sort of people we should strive to be. It is a book that a young man could probably not have written, inviting and encouraging us, as it does, to accept —indeed, to accept with gratitude —"the slowness of the good."

A Populist Foreign Policy?

WHO SPEAKS FOR AMERICA? WHY DEMOCRACY MATTERS IN FOREIGN POLICY. By ERIC ALTERMAN. *Cornell University Press. 224 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by **Lawrence F. Kaplan**

BENEATH THE TECHNOCRATIC jargon and competing claims that ob-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scure so many of today's foreign policy debates, there remains a familiar philosophical divide. Across that divide, two camps of intellectuals quarrel over the degree to which America's international conduct should reflect the nation's values and ideals.

The debate has, in many respects, evolved little since the First World War. Rhetoric once marshaled in support of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and later against the moral failings of détente is today, for example, mined by a coalition of religious activists, neoconservatives, and human rights advocates to criticize American policy toward China. Corporate spokesmen and foreign policy "realists" counter with an equally venerable catalogue of arguments, seeking to discredit the opinion that U.S. foreign policy rests on a uniquely moral foundation.

IN HIS PROVOCATIVE though deeply flawed *Who Speaks for America? Why Democracy Matters in Foreign Policy,* Eric Alterman challenges assumptions embraced by those on both sides of this exchange. The author, a columnist for the *Nation,* purports to bring a populist perspective to a dispute thus far conducted as a conversation between elites. It is precisely this elitism, and the manner in which it molds the contours of American foreign policy, that most rankles Alterman. Highlighting the detachment of the foreign policy establishment from the citizenry it ostensibly serves, he calls into question the certitude and motives of those who "invoke the language of altruism and uplift to justify actions that happen to increase . . . [American] power, prestige, or commercial wealth."

The architects of American statecraft, Alterman contends, seek mainly to achieve the narrow aims of the corporate sector. This is evident in both the style and substance of American diplomacy. If it is to reflect democratic ideals, the author reasons, U.S. foreign policy must instead be formulated through democratic means. For Alterman, this prescription constitutes less a procedural remedy than a moral imperative. Thus, he anticipates that a popularly conceived foreign policy would no longer sustain repressive regimes, blindly pursue open markets, and, more generally, compromise democratic values. No longer, in short, would American foreign policy be devised for the benefit of a select few.

That thesis challenges assumptions held dearly by members of the foreign affairs community. Indeed, to counsel the democratization of foreign policy deliberations is to renounce not only the American style of foreign policy, but also a liberal tradition. Enlightenment thinkers from Locke to Madison to Tocqueville specifically questioned the wisdom of allowing for democratic participation in matters of foreign affairs. Those reservations later would be shared by, among others, Franklin Roosevelt and Walter Lippmann. The latter wrote that on foreign policy issues, "the unhappy truth is that the prevailing public has been destructively wrong at critical junctures." Echoing that appraisal, no less an American institution than George Kennan compared the American public, uncharitably, to "one of those prehistoric monsters with a body as long as [a] room and brain the size of a pin."

ALTERMAN ELOQUENTLY counters this charge of public idiocy. "Even if the American people were as incompetent as the members of the foreign policy establishment believe they are, that would be an unacceptable argument for their exclusion from the foreign policy process," he writes. "In a democracy, the majority of the people have the right to be wrong." In a somewhat selective and always tendentious retelling of American history, Alterman tallies the costs of ignoring this truism. *Who Speaks for America?* recounts President after President disregarding the will of the American people and subsequently blundering into overseas quagmires. From the subjugation of the Philippines to the war in Vietnam, the author maintains,

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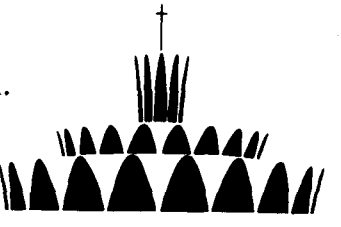

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elite wisdom repeatedly has been tested and found wanting. Not so the commonsense inclinations of the American public, which he praises at every turn as the source of republican virtue.

To be sure, Alterman concedes a few instances where popular opinion on international matters fell short and elites got things right—most notably, regarding the threat posed by Nazi Germany. Here too, the fault lay less with public ignorance than with flawed institutions, specifically the executive branch of the United States government. According to this view, the twentieth century witnessed an expansion of executive power in matters of foreign affairs extending well beyond the President's already oversized constitutional role. With enhanced power came insularity and a lack of accountability, which only reinforced elite disdain for the governed. Thus could Kennedy adviser Maxwell Taylor advise that, on matters of foreign policy, "a citizen should know those things he needs to be a good citizen and to discharge his functions."

By most accounts, that bargain collapsed in the jungles of Vietnam. Yet Alterman still discerns a public deceived, principally on trade-related issues. Prevailing elite wisdom, of course, sees expanded commerce as conducive to democracy, political freedoms, and much else besides. But as Alterman rightly admonishes, this formulation is too pat. A foreign policy based upon the principle of sheer acquisitiveness, he contends, not only slights democratic aims overseas, but is itself a product of antidemocratic means, namely, corporate lobbying and an elite consensus that runs counter to the preferences of a vast majority of Americans. Thus has the attempt "to pursue virtue and commerce" caught the foreign affairs establishment in a bind of its own devising, exposing the hollowness of its idealistic pretensions.

"Unless Americans are willing to rethink and ultimately to reconstruct the nation's present system for dealing with foreign policy issues," Alterman writes, "then the belief in democracy in America will become, in this fundamental aspect, a historical anachronism." To prevent this, the author recommends electing "citizen-juries" to oversee foreign policy deliberations. The idea is, however implausible, not an entirely new one. Prior to the Second World War, Congressman Louis Ludlow introduced a constitutional amendment requiring that declarations of war be subject to popular referendum. Members of the New Left floated a similar proposal during the Vietnam War. Alterman's vision, though, specifically derives from John Dewey's enthusiasm for a "Great Community" governed by plebiscite, and from Jürgen Habermas' related proposal for a "public sphere." He treats these concepts only briefly, all but conceding their *impracticality*. His policy recommendations are, indeed, unnecessary afterthoughts, having little to do with what has gone before.

STILL, ALTERMAN'S BOOK intrigues, perhaps because it restores an element of leftist indignation to an arena no longer known for ideological disputes. The novelty of *Who Speaks For America?* is, in that sense, precisely its strength. Yet, if we rarely hear such voices anymore, it is for good reason. Alterman, after all, has things slightly backward.

There is, to begin with, his misreading of that great Rorschach blot, the American People. Alterman's enthusiasm for a populist foreign policy rests on what he assumes will be its inevitably leftist character. Specifically, he foresees an enlightened public pressuring for an end to the unilateral use of force, demanding the cessation of covert action programs, and insist-

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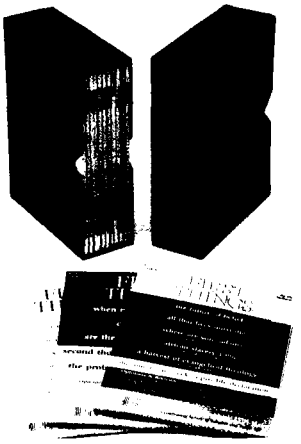

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ing on increased attention to global environmental concerns.

But are these likely to be the priorities of a populist foreign policy? To be sure, Alterman's skepticism toward trade agreements and military entanglements presumably would be sustained, but beyond that it is impossible to say. The disposition of populist statecraft could just as easily be nationalistic, even mean-spirited. Far from embracing "progressive" aims, a populist foreign policy might well scorn Alterman's "global issues" agenda, as well as his proposals to subordinate America's freedom of action to a web of multilateral institutions. To glean its temper and substance, then, an equally credible guide may be Pat Buchanan.

Then, too, Alterman's proposals themselves betray a certain elite sensibility. The author's calls for the United States to act only in concert with others, to secure "the destruction and replacement of the CIA," to put environmental considerations at the top of its foreign policy agenda—we have heard these before. They were themselves staples of a foreign affairs establishment that not so long ago equated populism with, among other "isms," anticommunism, militarism, and chauvinism. Nor were they any more products of public deliberation than policies embraced by elites at the opposite end of the ideological spectrum.

Their elitist roots do not, however, diminish the merits of Alterman's proposals (of which, it must be said, there are admittedly few). Indeed, the many flaws of an elite-devised foreign policy notwithstanding, modern history offers little evidence to bolster his contention that public support is, in matters of national policy, a necessary precondition to virtue. To the contrary, American foreign policy at its most principled moments owed its idealism less to democratic means than to democratic aims. Those aims derived, moreover, not from popular whims but from the ideals of a specific political system. Their export hardly requires extra-constitutional measures of the sort proposed in this peculiar manifesto.

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Joe Fletcher's Clone

WHO'S AFRAID OF HUMAN CLONING? By GREGORY PENCE. *Rowman & Littlefield. 181 pp. $45 cloth, $12.95 paper.*

***Reviewed by* Jorge Garcia**

GREGORY PENCE'S *Who's Afraid of Human Cloning?* is one of the first book-length defenses of the ethics of cloning human beings written by a philosophically trained bioethicist since the announcement in Britain of a successful experiment in cloning an adult animal.

After surprisingly negative initial reactions among "ethicists" to the prospect of cloning human beings, a predictable revisionism has set in, with many thinkers repudiating their earlier objections to cloning people. (The *New York Times* saw fit to print Laurence Tribe's op-ed "Second Thoughts on Cloning," though it contained no reasons—let alone new ones—to think cloning humans permissible.) Some of this appears to be motivated by a worry that any restriction on human cloning would be difficult to square with the abortion culture's insistence that any limits on someone's reproductive activities is an illegitimate infringement of her "reproductive rights." Pence is squarely within this camp.

His initial chapters offer mildly useful reviews of what the British scientists did, what ethicists have said about cloning during the past two decades, and what science fiction writers have imagined about it. Later chapters treat cloning and sexuality, embryo experimentation, arguments for and against human cloning, and the regulation of cloning. The book is less than two hundred pages, with most of its chapters only about a dozen pages long, and it is written in a lively style. Unfortunately, it is filled with arguments that are shallow, unfair, and foolish.

PENCE, A PHILOSOPHER, touches on a broad range of topics in the history of theology, scriptural interpretation, literary criticism, social behavior, and cultural development. Much of what he says on these topics is superficial: Augustine, Pence tells us, thought in marriage God gave people a license to sin. Since a sin is something God forbids and a license grants permission, we should like to hear more about the warrant for attributing this self-contradictory position to the great theologian. In this, we are disappointed. Contemporary Roman Catholics are taken to task for a supposed moral flip-flop in holding that "Sexual desire is no longer an evil force that lures young peo-

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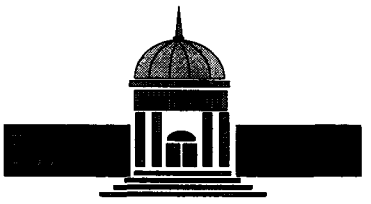
ple to hell—it has now become an uplifting expression of love in happy marriages": as if it were not possible, and even likely, that sexual desire is both good for married couples and dangerous for itchy teenagers. Again, when a Lutheran theologian worries that cloning might not comport with Genesis' picture of procreation, Pence complains that "the problem with Protestants justifying their views on biblical passages is that they only go there to justify what they already believe, not to find guidance." How he knows the man did not seek and receive guidance from the passage, did not read and reflect on it many times—the man is, after all, a theologian—Pence does not reveal. Pence's irritation extends beyond Scripture and churches to God himself. When some believers protest than human cloning contradicts the biblical idea that a child is God's gift, he impatiently asks "the Giver of the gift," with birth defects in mind, "'Gee, couldn't you do any better than that?'"

Besides showing contempt for Catholics and Protestants alike, Pence unashamedly manifests his ethnic prejudices. To the worry that "asexual reproduction" might so denature sex that cloning may come to rival intercourse as a way to have children, he counters with the snide reassurance that "for every high-minded couple who produced a superior child by [cloning] there would be a Brazilian couple who produced nine children by normal sex." The suggested contrast is stark even within the eugenics-tinged rhetoric of the fans of human cloning: "Better babies" and "superior child[ren]" for the "high-minded" through high-tech reproduction? Or Latinos rutting away, turning out their litters of inferior humans?

Eugenics aside, Pence's case for cloning amounts to little more than the usual assertions that cloning will give some people what they want and the standard appeals to supposed "reproductive rights." He is not above reducing his own arguments to their extreme and then embracing them. He proclaims it an advantage of cloning, indeed an advance in fairness, that it allows homosexuals to reproduce without having to trouble with reproductive sex. In Pence's world, justice means people are entitled to whatever they want without regard to nature. Since cloning also affords this service to avowed celibates, and even those with a yen for self-castration—not to mention opening reproduction to children, the unborn, and the dead—great strides against injustice seem just around the corner.

PENCE'S ESSAYS into moral theory are maladroit. He does John Stuart Mill's liberalism no favor by reducing its controversial "harm principle" to the claim that we are not permitted to tell people when they are acting immorally. Again, he thinks it suspicious when people believe something is wrong without being confident they can explain why, but the fact is that we frequently know the features a thing has without knowing the reasons it has them. This sort of dismissal of moral common sense used to impress people when it was plausible to think other theories could do without moral intuitions. It is now clear, however, that even utilitarian and consequentialist theories are filled with choices—based only on our intuition of what is right—between versions that maximize goods and those that minimize evils, those that maximize total good and those that maximize average good, those that restrict use of the utility principle to critics of moral action and those that extend it to agents' deliberations as well. Given all that, prissy disdain for the messiness of moral intuitions appears to be mere self-delusion.

Pence does little seriously to engage the major objections to human cloning raised by Leon Kass, Gilbert Meilaender, and others. To the charge that it may further erode family life, he responds that family life faces bigger, more immediate threats. True, but that is no reason to exacerbate a bad situation. As for concern that "asexual reproduction" will serve further to denature sex, Pence's views are unreconstructedly liberationist. He enthusiastically endorses one philosopher's account of "plain sex," according to which sex is understood in terms of a supposedly more fundamental notion of sexual desire, with that in turn defined as wanting physical contact and its pleasures. This theory has a few drawbacks (for one, sex—sexual differentiation, sexual organs, sexual activities—is found among plants, who have no desires; for another, this definition of sexual desire doesn't distinguish it from an urge to punch an enemy), but Pence cannot be bothered explaining or defending his position. To him, the debate is simply a battle between those on the side of human cloning, who trust people and follow reason, and those who fear people and react irrationally. Those who raise moral



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criticisms against embryo experiments merit only derision as "the embryo-saving crowd" and even "Keepers of the Holy Embryos."

Pence does nothing to show that human cloning leaves intact human uniqueness and dignity, especially in such wilder scenarios as someone making multiple clones of herself or someone's muddying familial life by bearing a child cloned from her own parent's genes. When children are manufactured to designer specifications, they and we are all debased and endangered.

PENCE'S OWN half-hearted endorsement of weak and temporary regulations on human cloning barely conceals his almost unreserved glee over the practice itself. By the end of the book he casts aside any pretense to scholarly diffidence and rejoices in the cloning of multiples, which had bothered him just a chapter before. He calls for a day when cloning can help us match babies to parents as we can dogs to owners, and he affirms that people are but "compassionate monkeys."

To Pence, the whole question of cloning human beings needs to be "Fletcherized," by which he means it needs an injection of the crude act-utilitarianism of the late Joseph Fletcher, whose "situation ethics" sank religious ethics into secular degradation three decades ago and spawned the proportionalist "revisionism" that still afflicts much Catholic and some Protestant moral thinking. Fletcher—to whom Pence affectionately applies one of Stalin's nicknames, "Old Joe"—was ahead of his time in breaking eggs to cook up his omelette: mercy killing, abortion, fetal and pre-fetal experimentation, and the manufacture of human beings all figured in his recipe. Pence proclaims in his book's last sentence, "Call me Joe Fletcher's clone." He has, unfortunately, lived down to that aspiration.

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A Sabbath Meal

KADDISH. By LEON WIESELTIER. *Knopf. 588 pp. $27.50.*

***Reviewed by* David Novak**

PROBABLY THE MOST important cultural phenomenon in contemporary Jewry is the rise of what some have called the "*ba'al teshuvah* movement." This is the return to traditional Judaism by a number of young Jews who had heretofore been estranged from it. These young Jews have brought a renewed passion and energy to traditional Jewish life and community, even to those Jews who themselves never left the tradition. However, in the literal sense, almost all of these returning young (and not so young) Jews are not really "returning" to something they themselves have lost. Instead, much more often than not, they are retrieving a Judaism that their parents, or grandparents, or in some cases even their great-grandparents willingly left behind. In fact, some Jewish teachers have actually placed these "returnees" in the talmudic category of the "child kidnaped in infancy" (*tinoq she-nishbah*), who is someone almost like a convert, thus needing to be gradually introduced to what is essentially new to his or her individual experience.

These returnees have belied the belief (common in my youth) that the most to which traditional Judaism could look forward is a decent burial. Nevertheless, they have also created some serious problems. Coming with virtually no Jewish knowledge, yet eager for instant and authentic Jewish experience, they frequently make gigantic leaps of faith, often leading them into the most mindless forms of traditional Judaism, be it belief in the messiahhood of a now dead hasidic rebbe from Brooklyn, or to belief that the configuration of the letters in the currently accepted version of the text of the Pentateuch can be read as "codes" to predict future events in the world. Moreover, having little or no real experience of traditional Jewish life and learning, they often create for themselves a romantic view of a totally pious Jewish past that never was nor could have been. Added to these problems is the fact that teachers of traditional Judaism have been so flattered by the renewed attention they have been receiving from these people, often persons of intelligence and accomplishment, that they have been afraid to dispel their illusions. Not to mince words, they have pandered to them, and in the process have "dumbed down" much of the tradition's splendid rationality. Indeed, some of these teachers have themselves created a large—and lucrative—literature, most of which makes anyone who has gone through the rigors of a good talmudic education cringe.

ALL OF THE ABOVE needs to be kept in mind in order to understand the historical location of Leon

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Wieseltier's remarkable book, *Kaddish*. For Wieseltier is very much a *ba'al teshuvah*, a returnee to the Jewish tradition—but with a fundamental difference from those discussed above. He is returning to a tradition that really once was his own home, and that return has been occasioned by his mourning the death of his father, who first brought him up in that home. The most important part of the process of mourning is regularly reciting kaddish in a synagogue. Kaddish is a doxology, which Jewish tradition has mandated children to recite daily in a synagogue during the year of mourning for a deceased parent and then on the anniversary of his or her death thereafter. Wieseltier's return is not just a return to traditional forms; it is also a return to the literary sources of the Jewish tradition, particularly as they pertain to his current kaddish practice. It is most of all a highly intelligent retrieval of the wisdom of the Jewish tradition, for which Wieseltier has been well prepared by his education in Judaism, from elementary yeshiva to graduate work in Jewish studies at Harvard. At long last, at least in contemporary American literature, we have a real *ba'al teshuvah* in the person of Leon Wieseltier who, I think, has upped the ante for all the other returnees by analogy.

There are two texts, not just one, interwoven in this book; and which is the main text and which the subtext depends on who the reader is. The bulk of the book is devoted to lengthy discussions of many classical Jewish sources (especially classical legal, or *halakhic*, sources) on mourning in general and kaddish, its forms and occasions, in particular. Wieseltier handles these sources with great skill; indeed, his felicitous translations of them and pointed comments on them alone would be well worth the price of the book.

Although Wieseltier's own thoughts, which are more meditative than anecdotal, comprise less of the quantity of the book, they are nonetheless what give it its true quality. Many readers will probably concentrate on them and skim over the many learned passages as interludes. That is quite understandable, but even these more general readers should be aware that without these learned discussions, the book could easily give the impression of a kind of "armchair" philosophy rather than Leon Wieseltier's hard-won understanding seeking faith (to invert Anselm's famous "faith seeking understanding").

THE BOOK CONSISTS, in significant part, of quasi-Nietzschean aphorisms, making it difficult to explain in a review. We can, though, examine *Kaddish* through the lens of how Wieseltier addresses the following question about his own life: Isn't this book the machinations of a complicated mind struggling to resolve conflicts long unresolved, to finally get them behind you and so be able to get on with the nontraditional life (in the Jewish sense) you have long been leading—and enjoying? Are you not projecting onto the Jewish tradition your own hangups? Isn't it easier to deal with your admittedly difficult father—a Holocaust survivor—through the tradition and its community rather than directly facing him in your memory?

All of this, Wieseltier shoots back, comes from the widely held secularist notion that religion is only an epiphenomenon, one better explained by the authentic phenomenon of one's own psyche. He expresses his impatience with "psychology tricked out as religion," so common in the type of religion as therapy that he thinks began in the 1960s (although it goes back at least to the 1940s best-seller, *Peace of Mind*, by the Reform rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman). This type of thinking basically tries to argue that of course religion is essentially subjective, only that it is better for you than Freud and others would have had us believe. Speaking of his synagogue in Washington, Wieseltier bluntly states, "I am not here for therapy," even suggesting that Judaism might be "psychologically useless."

Wieseltier has first to face his earlier loss of faith, which for a Jew always involves dropping the practice of the commandments. He speaks of "years ago, when I stopped praying," and having also stopped living a traditional Jewish life for over twenty years (he is now in his forties). He speaks of "the adventure of self-creation!"—a powerfully Jewish statement, because atheism (being without God) is never a simple absence but, rather, a substitution of the true God with a false god. It is idolatry, in its modern form a monotheism in which the self is just as "jealous" a god as the Lord God of Israel. Wieseltier's youthful departure is quintessentially modern, especially because it is a conscious first-generation rebellion. Happily, though, he spares us the autobiographical details (which today tend to the predictably lurid).

WHAT SEEMS to be the beginning of his "turning around" (the literal meaning of *teshuvah*) is the realization that his subjective loss does not necessarily imply an objective absence. As the Talmud puts it, "If there is emptiness, the emptiness is from you [not from the Torah]." As Wieseltier puts it, "When Nietzsche lost his faith, he concluded that God is dead. . . . This is narcissism. . . . I do not understand the idea that if you do not believe in Him, then God does not exist."

In another intriguing passage, Wieseltier quotes a friend who questions his synagogue attendance for kaddish by saying, "But I believe in God and you don't!" It would seem that this friend can say this because heretofore the only Leon Wieseltier she has known has been the nonbeliever. He continues by noting, "If she means that I do not believe in the way she believes, then she is right. Still, I'm not praying and studying entirely for filial reasons. I am not *only* a son." For me, this is the key passage in the whole book, and merits analysis.

First, who is this friend? She is a woman, someone who seems to know the author quite well, although we are not informed of any romantic involvement. Is she a tra-

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ditional Jewish woman? If she is, then he seems to be saying to and through her that his retrieval of the tradition and its God can never be the same as the uninterrupted piety of the consistently faithful. As the Talmud puts it, "Where the penitent stand, even the fully righteous cannot stand." It is simply a more hard-won faith; it has its unique rewards. However, if she is not a traditional Jewish woman, is not even Jewish, then Wieseltier might be saying that he is struggling with God as Jacob did. He cannot simply assume that there will always be a blessing for him in the way of Esau; like Jacob, he is coming out of this long encounter limping. This sort of encounter with God is anything but therapeutic by any worldly criterion.

Second, "I am not *only* a son" could mean that his father, Mark Wieseltier, is the transmitter of the tradition to his son, Leon. For that reason, Leon's saying kaddish "for him" is what filial piety calls for here and now. Nevertheless, Mark Wieseltier is neither the source nor the end of the tradition. To make that mistake would be like the sin of ancestor worship. The source of the tradition is God's revelation in the Torah; the end of the tradition is the final and complete eschatological reconciliation with God. In between, we have the transmission and its transmitters, whose transitional status must not be forgotten.

In reading this passage, I was reminded of a comment by the great commentator Nahmanides, whose work on mourning is the first major text Wieseltier tackles in this book. Nahmanides is curious as to why the commandment to "honor your father and your mother" is the transitional commandment in the Ten Commandments, ending the commandments on the first tablet, which are seen as being "between humans and God," and leading into the commandments on the second tablet, which are seen as being "between humans themselves." Nahmanides writes, "For God is our first father, and the one who sired us is our last father. So it is as if to say that when I command you about my honor, so do I command you about the honor of the one associated with Me in your creation."

AS A *BA'AL TESHUVAH*, Wieseltier ably confronts the talmudic teaching that "even though one has sinned, he is still a Jew." In the Talmud this teaching refers to the Jewish people corporately, but after Rashi and the crusades in the eleventh century with the apostasy they brought, it is taken to refer to each individual Jew. From this teaching, Wieseltier infers two things. Many modern Jews "fear oppressive Judaism . . . not oppressive Christianity." In other words, the teaching reminds these Jews that God makes demands upon them in the Torah and tradition, demands that are not of their own making. Indeed, one could say that an undemanding God (like the gods of so much "psychological religion") is no God at all. (Considering Wieseltier's anti-Christian remarks in the past, this admission, plus another appreciation of similarity between Jewish and Christian piety, is striking.)

Furthermore, Judaism is not "the easy ethnicity in which [modern Jews] sooner or later seek refuge"; the teaching is not saying that to be a Jew one must acknowledge some vague Jewish "identity." Instead, the saying reminds Jews that even when one has not heard the call of the commandments addressed to all Israel, the call is still being addressed to you. No one can ever check out of the covenant, however long he or she is truant. Only a demanding God could possibly want to take you back however long it takes. Only by a demanding God could you possibly want to be forgiven. Demanding is an essential aspect of true care.

Let me close this review on a personal note. I received my review copy of the book on a Friday afternoon, the eve of the Sabbath. I always try to set aside reading material for the Sabbath that I hope will feed my soul, and avoid reading material that I am afraid will starve it. Having strongly disagreed with some of Leon Wieseltier's writings in the past, I wondered whether or not I should read his *Kaddish* on the Sabbath. Thumbing through it, I decided to take a chance. It turned out to provide me with a rich Sabbath meal, filled with many new unexpected delicacies. In that sense, Leon Wieseltier has been my host at his Sabbath table. There is a Yiddish expression he probably heard at his own father's table, *vos iz tsu Gott tsu Gott, tsu leit tsu leit,* which roughly translated means, "Thank God first and then don't forget who helped Him feed you." Let this review be my fulfillment of that duty.

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE PRINCE OF EGYPT: ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK. *Compact Disc from Uni/DreamWorks Records. $17.97.*

THE PRINCE OF EGYPT: INSPIRATIONAL. *Compact Disc from Uni/DreamWorks Records. $16.97.*

THE PRINCE OF EGYPT: NASHVILLE. *Compact Disc from Uni/DreamWorks Records. $16.97.*

The movie *Prince of Egypt,* produced by Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks Pictures, has received a lot of attention in the Christian press. And well it should, for it's a visually splendid retelling of Moses' early life that takes only modest liberties with the biblical account (although historians will complain that the writers perpetuate the notion that Ramses II was the pharaoh with whom Moses contended; he most likely wasn't). The directing is splendidly inventive. The artwork is vivid and the animation nothing less than spectacular (the parting of the Red Sea alone is worth the price of seeing the movie, and seeing it again). Too bad the music isn't quite up to the standards of the rest of the work. Hans Zimmer has taken

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songs written for the movie by Stephen Schwartz and composed a serviceable film score of the Lawrence of Arabia meets Vaughan Williams type. There are brief snatches reminiscent of Carl Orff and actually a rather nice bit that features a knock-off of Philip Glass' signature ostinati. It's a functional score, and gives one a greater appreciation for John Williams' work. Stephen Schwartz's songs are a different matter. The work of Alan Menken and Howard Ashman (the team that wrote *The Little Mermaid*, among others) is the standard for such music, and Schwartz rarely rises to their melodic invention or textual wit. Some of the pieces are an embarrassment (as in the "Playing with the Big Boys" in which the priests of Egypt try to intimidate Moses), while others are simply clumsy (as in the opening "Deliver Us"). And when Schwartz really needs to deliver THE BIG TUNE (you know, the "Climb Every Mountain" moment), he gives us the rather flat-footed and formulaic "When You Believe," which all of Zimmer's orchestral tricks can't rescue from mediocrity. As part of the spin-off campaign that accompanies the movie, the producers have issued not the usual one CD, but three CDs of *Prince*-related music, each geared to a different audience. We have the original soundtrack (DreamWorks Records DRMD-50041), a "Nashville" version (DRMD-50045), and an "Inspirational" version (DRMD-50050). The Nashville and Inspirational CDs contain pieces that are not part of the original film score but are thematically related to it by their focus on deliverance and freedom. It's a good thing for the DreamWorks folks, because both of these spin-offs are better than the original soundtrack. The Nashville CD is a lineup of Country all-stars with Pam Tillis' "Milk and Honey" and Wynonna's (like Madonna, Ms. Judd now no longer requires a last name) "Freedom" being genuine finds. The "Inspirational" CD is primarily a collection of black Gospel performances. Here "Destiny" by Take 6 is an intriguingly funky mix of Middle Eastern elements with the ensemble's signature close harmonies. Both Bebe and Cece Winans have fine cuts, as does Kirk Franklin, while Shirley Caesar again demonstrates her right to the crown of gospel singers with "Moses the Deliverer," which closes the CD. The albums can be bought as a boxed set; I think the DreamWorks folks hope you'll buy all three.

— *Michael Linton*

DIVORCED DADS: SHATTERING THE MYTHS. By SANFORD L. BRAVER with DIANE O'CONNELL. *J. P. Tarcher. 288 pp. $24.95.*

The gender wars are nowhere more in evidence than over the issue of divorce. Men, at least in popular culture, have often been the losers. The image of the bad divorced dad has become, in its "deadbeat" and other forms, a powerful force in modern culture. This book, which can be considered part of a new "male backlash" genre, sets out to rectify that situation. Divorced dads, it argues, have gotten a bum rap. Bringing much wisdom and scholarship to the task, it finds serious flaws in much of the empirical research that has bolstered the bad dad image. You cannot read the book without gaining an appreciation that divorced dads are much better than they are reputed to be. Yet one leaves the book feeling not totally convinced. Presumptive joint-custody, as the book recommends, may be the best legal outcome of divorce, but let us not forget a fundamental fact of human life—the mother-child bond is stronger than the father-child bond, and fathers do tend to disconnect from their children more than mothers do.

— *David Popenoe*

CONSILIENCE: THE UNITY OF KNOWLEDGE. By EDWARD O. WILSON. *Knopf. 352 pp. $26.*

Edward O. Wilson is a great scientist and a marvelous writer whose graceful and lucid prose rivals that of one of his masters, Charles Darwin. His love affair with the world and all its complexity comes through loud and clear in *Consilience*, in which he stakes out the ground of High Theory. The dream of a unified science or logic of explanation of all that exists dies hard; indeed, it is resurrected, it seems, in each generation, often by our most creative and accomplished thinkers. Now comes Professor Wilson to call it into being again in *Consilience*, a survey of all branches of human knowledge that is nothing less than a tour de force, though, as is not uncommon in such efforts, it has moments that are problematic and less than satisfying. Wilson's notion of the connectedness of things and their ultimate unity, as well as the enormous intellectual challenge of formulating consilience, feeds his "religious hunger." But religious hunger directed towards anything other than the transcendent is certain to go awry. Even if one were as enthusiastic about the idea of consilience as Professor Wilson, it would not neatly solve any of the problems he notes, especially in the humanities and social sciences. Provisional "solutions" to these problems—mostly messy compromises—are possible. If what Wilson calls "the transcendent" and "the empirical" can be brought closer together, then those of us who refuse to close the window to transcendence (in Charles Taylor's phrase) and those who have slammed it shut might find that we have a bit more in common. To hope for more than that—especially in the form of "controlled" lives and futures—is to hope for too much.

— *Jean Bethke Elshtain*

EX-FRIENDS. By NORMAN PODHORETZ. *Free Press. 244 pp. $25.*

The subtitle tells a large part of the story: "Falling Out with Allen Ginsberg, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Lillian Hellman, Hannah Arendt, and Norman Mailer." Podhoretz, the long-time editor of *Commentary*, gives a scintillating insider's

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account of what he calls The Family and that others, following Irving Howe, call The New York Intellectuals, a group of mainly Jewish writers and academics who, from the late 1930s through the early 1960s, played a major part in determining what issues and positions were deserving of attention by "serious" thinkers. His depictions of those with whom he "fell out" over the years are crisp, often humorous, and seldom unkind. Some might think Podhoretz was unfortunate in his friends and others might think his friends were unfortunate in him, but he is grateful for the contentious entanglement of friendships and ideas that has brought him to where he is as one who intends to challenge "the regnant leftist culture that pollutes the spiritual and cultural air we all breathe, and to do so with all my heart and all my soul and all my might." That paraphrase, perhaps inadvertent, of what the Bible prescribes as the devotion due to God alone suggests an earnestness about ideas that might seem to preclude the intellectual highjinks, pervasive gossip, and boozy fun that, Podhoretz leaves no doubt, was also very much part of the life of The Family. In poignant, sometimes tender, passages, Podhoretz misses his friends and the world they made together. He thinks our culture today is poorer in the absence of a comparable community of intellectual friendship and battle, and maybe he is right about that. But The Family was constructed by circumstances that cannot be replicated: The warfare within the Old Left between Stalinists, Trotskyites, and sundry other Marxists; New York Jews first "making it" (the title of an early and much controverted book by Podhoretz) in the high culture; the crusade against Nazism and coming to terms with the Holocaust; the effort of former Communists and fellow travelers, along with the non-Marxist Left, to articulate an anti-Communist liberalism on freedom's side of the Cold War. In the early 1960s, Podhoretz was moving *Commentary* sharply to the left; a decade later he was turning it into the leading voice of what would become the neoconservatism that helped prepare the way for the Reagan Revolution. *Ex-Friends,* however, is about much more than what is usually meant by politics. It is an utterly engaging chronicle of a half century of the politics of ideas and personalities that have, in large part, shaped our intellectual and moral culture. A strong book strongly recommended.

LOVE UNDETECTABLE: NOTES ON FRIENDSHIP, SEX, AND SURVIVAL. By ANDREW SULLIVAN. *Knopf. 254 pp. $23.*

Three elegantly crafted essays that are perhaps without precedent in gay literature, perhaps because they are not gay literature. Occasioned by the death from AIDS of his friend (not his lover) Patrick, Sullivan reflects on the meaning of friendship as something very different from—and, he suggests, much more rare and elevated than—"being in love," not to mention having sex. Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, and the eleventh-century monk St. Aelred figure prominently in these reflections that are unabashedly Christian and Catholic, even, in most respects, orthodox. Sullivan has written elsewhere and at length on his disagreement with the Christian tradition, and Catholic teaching in particular, with respect to the licitness of homosexual acts, and is perhaps today's foremost proponent of same-sex "marriage." In the present book he will likely jeopardize his credentials as a "gay spokesperson" by offering a not entirely dismissive discussion of reparative therapy for homosexuals.

GREGORY THE GREAT AND HIS WORLD. By R. A. MARKUS. *Cambridge University Press. 241 pp. $59.95 cloth, $22.95 paper.*

A distinguished patristic scholar evaluates the person and work of Gregory I, who succeeded to the See of Rome in 590. Gregory, who was thoroughly monastic in spirit, was deeply devoted to Augustine, and Markus is especially effective in tracing the differences that two hundred years had made between the "worlds" of Augustine and Gregory. In Augustine's time, Christians were the "third people," after pagan Romans and Jews, while by the end of the sixth century they were indisputably the "first people," with all that entailed for the development of Christendom. This is a scholarly work and much of the discussion of texts and sources will be chiefly of interest to specialists, but the general reader can also benefit greatly from this careful reading of a personality and period decisive for the subsequent Christian story.

FIDEL'S CUBA: A REVOLUTION IN PICTURES. By OSVALDO and ROBERTO SALAS. *Beyond Words Publishing/ Thunder's Mouth Press. 176 pp. $34.95.*

The Salases, a father and son team, were the official photojournalists for Fidel Castro from the time of the revolution in 1959 until Osvaldo died in 1992 (his son Roberto still lives and works in Havana). In page after page of gorgeously shot propaganda photos dating to before the revolution, we see two consummate artists capturing Castro as he was seen by those who worshipped him, the *fidelistas.* Many of the best-known photos of Castro, Ché Guevara, the Bay of Pigs invasion, and Cuban "workers" were taken by Osvaldo for the magazine *Revolución,* and are included in this volume, for which Roberto wrote the running commentary and added some pictures of his own. Though born in New York City, Roberto Salas is a *fidelista* to the end: "There are things I don't agree with in Cuba. I'm not a blind bat. But you walk down the street in any city in the world—you'll find good and bad. New York? The woman who shops at Saks Fifth Avenue thinks it's great. But the guy in the slum has a different opinion. They're both right." Not blind, just a useful idiot, who did

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his best to persuade the Cuban people that freedom is slavery, and evil beautiful.

OBJECTIONS SUSTAINED: SUBVERSIVE ESSAYS ON EVOLUTION, LAW & CULTURE. By PHILLIP E. JOHNSON. *InterVarsity Press. 188 pp. $15.99.*

Readers will already be familiar with the work of Phillip Johnson, the hard-hitting critic of blind allegiance to Darwinian orthodoxy. This collection of essays, most of them book reviews, lays out the broad outlines of Johnson's project. The materialist underpinnings of secular science get the most attention, particularly in the first half of the book. Johnson also touches on a wide range of other issues, from the absurdity of postmodern science to the appeal of Eastern Christianity to the abdication of revealed truth in American universities. The succinct explication of his ideas makes this an excellent introduction to Johnson's countercultural thinking.

KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH IN THOMAS AQUINAS. By JOHN I. JENKINS, C.S.C. *Cambridge University Press. 267 pp. $59.95.*

Father Jenkins of Notre Dame's philosophy and theology departments has written a truly revolutionary book. Most who encounter the *Summa Theologiae* see a maze of questions, articles, objections, responses, and replies; hence the temptation to turn Aquinas into a textbook on philosophy, theology, morals, and even science. He is accused of creating a "system" of philosophy, which can be opposed to other systems of philosophy and found superior (or, by his critics, quite deficient). Jenkins shows that the *Summa* is not a system that provides categories of thought, but an attempt to ground all our thoughts about God and his creation in our participation in God's mind. According to Aristotle, for mere knowledge to be called *episteme* (roughly, "understanding") requires that we understand the causes of things better than we understand their effects. Jenkins argues persuasively from substantial textual evidence that Aquinas was after *episteme*: he wanted to understand God, the Cause of all things, better than he understood creation. What's more, he wanted to view creation through his understanding of God. Along the way to proving his thesis, Jenkins rewrites the book on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* (his reading, and his devastating criticisms of Oxford's influential Jonathan Barnes, set the standard for such scholarship) and he shows how even the most decorated of contemporary "philosophers of religion" (Plantinga, Stump, Penelhaum, et al.) grossly misread Aquinas. Through careful scholarship and tightly argued readings, Jenkins does that rarest of things—he says something truly new about what we thought we long ago understood.

GREAT FEUDS IN SCIENCE: TEN OF THE LIVELIEST DISPUTES EVER. By HAL HELLMAN. *John Wiley & Sons. 240 pp. $24.95.*

Those who promote science in the public square often pretend that, unlike other parts of our life, science is a serene intellectual endeavor entirely removed from the passions and prejudice that characterize, say, political or religious disputes. The author wants to show that "scientists are susceptible to human emotions; that they are influenced by pride, greed, belligerence, jealousy, and ambition, as well as religious and national feelings; . . . that they are in truth fully human." Among the feuds he describes are the high-profile clashes between Galileo and Urban VII over heliocentricism and between Thomas Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce over evolution, as well as less well known disputes such as that between Hobbes and the mathematician John Wallis over whether algebra was a legitimate development in mathematics or whether it was mere chicken-scratchings (Hobbes' position). Lively history by a professional science journalist, *Great Feuds* reminds us that great intellects are often married to strong wills—and not always blissfully!

POLITICAL ORPHAN? THE PRO-LIFE CAUSE AFTER 25 YEARS OF *ROE V. WADE*. By KENNETH D. WHITEHEAD. *New Hope Publications. 353 pp. $14.95 paper.*

The pro-life movement has grown up and grown wiser in the years following the infamous decision. This book is part polemic, part history, part commentary on the trials and triumphs, with particular emphasis on the last five years (1993-1998). Whitehead's essays, culled from the magazines and journals where they first appeared, range in focus from the hopes of a Republican Congress to papal encyclicals to the appointment of the Surgeon General. Nothing if not thorough, *Political Orphan* details where the anti-abortion battle is now and where it must go next.

TOWARD THE RENEWAL OF CIVILIZATION: POLITICAL ORDER AND CULTURE. Edited by T. WILLIAM BOXX and GARY M. QUINLIVAN. *Eerdmans. 208 pp. $16 paper.*

Hadley Arkes, Hilton Kramer, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Claes G. Ryn, Robert P. George, and Ralph McInerny headline the contributors to this collection of essays, based on a conference at St. Vincent College in Pennsylvania held to discuss the state of American civilization and what to do about it. Filled with realism about the present and a cautious hopefulness about the future, this volume points the way forward by looking back to—in that apt expression—first things.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

The Gods of Left and Right

We are regularly cautioned against stereotypes, and rightly so. A stereotype is a type or image that is unchangeable, as though carved in stone (from the Greek *stereos*, meaning solid). On the other hand, stereotypes exist because certain images or impressions are so often reinforced by experience. This is true of stereotypes of all sorts—national, racial, ethnic, religious, occupational. In fact, stereotypes are essential to daily living. They make up a large part of the stock of wisdom that we call common sense. As Jesse Jackson observed in an unguarded moment, if you see five young white males coming from a Bible class on one side of the street and five young black males hanging out on the other side, you have no trouble in knowing which side of the street you want to be on. Stereotypes are also essential to most forms of humor. Lawyer jokes would not be funny were there not so many lawyers who are that way. Drag queens must fit the stereotype of drag queens or they simply are not drag queens, and television sitcoms are entirely dependent upon playing off, and against, stereotypes—whether of the inner city, white suburbia, the rural South, or interfering mothers-in-law.

Stereotypes also and inevitably make up a large part of our thinking about big questions such as religion and politics, and about the ways in which those two big questions get strangely entangled. For instance, we often encounter, not least of all in these pages, the stereotype of mainline/oldline/sideline Protestantism as a pitifully dispirited world of uncertain belief joined to desperate trendiness and institutional decline. Within oldline Protestantism there are many exceptions, but that is the stereotype because it is so persistently reinforced by what old-line Protestants, especially the more visible and vocal of them, say and do. The precipitous decline of liberal Protestantism is frequently viewed as a phenomenon of the last few decades, but the stereotype of religious liberalism as desiccated and dying goes back much further in time. Of the New England Protestantism that he knew, Herman Melville wrote in 1876,

> Rome and the Atheist have gained:
> These two shall fight it out—these two;
> Protestantism being retained
> For base of operations sly
> by Atheism.

It is the case that many leaders of what might be called the politics of atheism have been but one step or one generation removed from the liberal Protestant pulpit. An outstanding instance was the enormously influential John Dewey, who proposed to Americans that they replace their traditional religion with a "common faith" of socialist struggle. Dewey is claimed as intellectual godfather, so to speak, by Richard Rorty, a person of considerable influence in today's academy. On the political side of the strange entanglement of religion and politics, there are also stereotypes that have been reinforced over the years. Ever since the French Revolution formally divided the house, we have had a left and a right, with the attendant stereotypes of each. From time to time, voices are raised urging us to get beyond such labels, beyond left and right, beyond liberal and conservative. Such voices belong to those who are aptly called "beyondists" and they are usually located on the left.

An Occasion to Look Again

Inevitable though they are, stereotypes should be regularly challenged. At least they should be reexamined, to see whether our assumptions fit the facts. While they have an impressive solidity, stereotypes, too, need to be readjusted on occasion. A good occasion for reexamining the religion and politics of left and right is offered by Richard Rorty's recent little book, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist*

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Thought in Twentieth-Century America (Harvard University Press). Engaging Rorty's stereotypes can also result in a honing of our own. Of stereotypes Rorty has no shortage. The stereotypes begin with the defining differences between left and right. The difference is marvelously simple: The left is for change, the right is against change. "For the right," says Rorty, "never thinks that anything much needs to be changed: it thinks the country is basically in good shape, and may well have been in better shape in the past. It sees the left's struggle for social justice as mere trouble making, as utopian foolishness. The left, by definition, is the party of hope."

You say it is risible to claim that figures such as Gary Bauer, James Dobson, Phyllis Schlafly, William Bennett, and Robert Bork think the country is basically in good shape, and you are right. But stay with me. I assure you Professor Rorty is a man of influence, and the lectures collected in *Achieving Our Country* have become a much-discussed point of reference on the left. What defines the left, says Rorty, is commitment to social justice, and social justice is defined, in turn, by the socialized redistribution of wealth. The defining cause of the left is, says Rorty, "substituting social justice for individual freedom as our country's principal goal." In this light it becomes apparent that the term "conservative intellectual" is an oxymoron. "For intellectuals are supposed to be aware of, and speak to, issues of social justice. But even the most learned and thoughtful of current conservatives ridicule those who raise such issues."

In response to that, I am tempted to describe in detail what is happening in conservative circles these days. For instance, a recent meeting at the conservative Manhattan Institute that brought together hundreds of leaders to learn from and help support black and Hispanic organizers working through faith-based agencies to transform the lives of the poor, especially young people, coping with drugs, criminal gangs, fatherless families, and other burdens. But I will resist the temptation, except to note that in cities across the country, and generally under conservative auspices, such street-level programs of personal and community renewal are rapidly multiplying. Nothing comparable is happening on the left. And, of course, it is conservatives who are pressing for the basic justice of parental choice in education, a choice taken for granted by the affluent. But our interest here is in the stereotypes of Mr. Rorty, and none of these concerns counts as "social justice" in his view since they are not aimed at advancing the redistribution of wealth under the auspices of the state. On the contrary, such efforts are reactionary because they have personal freedom, responsibility, and opportunity, rather than Mr. Rorty's "social justice," as their principal goal.

The Name of the Dream

An appendix to *Achieving Our Country* is a eulogy of the late Irving Howe, a political saint of Mr. Rorty's vision of the left. Toward the end of his life, Howe averred that, despite all the crushing disappointments of "real existent socialism," it remained the case that "socialism is the name of our dream." For Rorty, that dream is nothing less than a religion, of whom the chief apostles are Walt Whitman and John Dewey, and of which America is the New Jerusalem. "They wanted Americans," writes Rorty, "to take pride in what America might, all by itself and by its own lights, make of itself, rather than in America's obedience to any authority —even the authority of God." Especially the authority of God. He quotes Whitman:

> And I call to mankind. Be not curious about God. For I who am curious about each am not curious about God.

Whitman and Dewey, writes Rorty, "wanted that utopian America to replace God as the unconditional object of desire." "They wanted the struggle for social justice to be the country's animating principle, the nation's soul." In what some might take as an idolatrously perverse patriotism, Rorty admiringly quotes Whitman's exclamation, "How long it takes to make this American world see that it is, in itself, the final authority and reliance!" The older forms of religion have long been superfluous, even obstacles, to the dream. "Whitman and Dewey, I have argued, gave us all the romance, and all the spiritual uplift, we Americans need to go about our public business." This religion of patriotic fervor sets Rorty against other leftisms with their "semi-conscious anti-Americanism, which they carried over from the rage of the late sixties."

The "spiritual uplift" supplied by the religion of social justice is not simply for "public business" but also for personal redemption. Unlike Marx and others who tried to turn socialism into a science and thought they knew what would happen, Rorty's religion is radically open to, adamantly insistent upon, the new—making possible a life of "pure, joyous hope." The past, including Christianity, contributes to his childlike piety of limitless possibility. "The moral we should draw from the European past, and in particular from Christianity, is not instruction about the authority under which we should live, but suggestions about how to make ourselves wonderfully different from anything that has been." Americans must embrace an endless revolution of new beginnings; every achievement is but prelude to another radically new beginning. "This new culture will be better because it will contain more variety in unity—it will be a tapestry in which more strands have been woven together.

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But this tapestry, too, will eventually have to be torn to shreds in order that a larger one may be woven, in order that the past may not obstruct the future."

Yet Rorty insists that such soaring flights of socialist devotion must be tethered to the "real politics" of incremental change in using the state to combat capitalist exploitation—capitalist exploitation being the religion of the right. He is withering in his critique of an academic left that has become "spectatorial" in its obsession with "theory" that is disengaged from the real world. The university is, for Rorty, the ecclesial magisterium of the religion of social justice, and it is today threatened by heretics. The academic left should understand that "It's the economy, stupid," but is instead captive to theory and culture. "Leftists in the academy," he complains, "have permitted cultural politics to supplant real politics, and have collaborated with the right in making cultural issues central to public debate." In calling the left to return to an older economics-based reformism, however, Rorty is careful not to appear threatening to the cultural, and especially the sexual and gender concerns, that have so preoccupied the left in recent years.

The Return of Original Sin

Nonetheless, the academic theorists on the left are undermining the Whitmanesque hope of limitless possibility. The disciples of Foucault dismiss that hope as naive "humanism." "Hopelessness," says Rorty, "has become fashionable on the left—principled, theorized, philosophical hopelessness." "I see this preference for knowledge over hope as repeating the move made by leftist intellectuals who, earlier in the century, got their Hegelianism from Marx rather than Dewey." Put differently, they prefer scientific theory to utopian religion. Theorists on the left, says Rorty, are guilty of reintroducing the concept of original sin. The Foucauldian suspicion of "power" is "reminiscent of the ubiquity of Satan, and thus of the ubiquity of original sin." By way of sharpest contrast, "the repudiation of the concept of *sin was at the heart of Dewey and Whitman's civic* religion."

The betrayal of the intellectuals takes many forms, in Rorty's judgment. He criticizes the undercutting of our common identity as Americans, the elect people, by an obsession with group identity and the politics of victimization. "If the cultural left insists on its present strategy—on asking us to respect one another in our differences rather than asking us to cease noticing those differences—it will have to find a new way of creating a sense of commonality at the level of national politics." This comes as an aside that Rorty does not develop, but it sounds suspiciously like support for racial integration and opposition to affirmative action and quotas, which are of course causes of a conservative hue. It is perhaps not surprising that in this connection Rorty dares only to hint at the vastness of the gap between his left and the left now regnant in the university. He dare not alienate that left entirely if he is to have any takers for his proposal that the left should "emerge from the academy into the public square," returning to what he calls the real world of politics.

Rorty's proposal is deeply colored by nostalgia for a world that was. His grandfather was Walter Rauschenbusch, the foremost champion of the Protestant "social gospel" movement, and it is to that creed, revised by Dewey to free it from an inconvenient God, that he would be faithful. "Because a lot of my relatives helped write and administer New Deal legislation," he recalls, "I associated leftism with a constant need for new laws and new bureaucratic initiatives which would redistribute the wealth produced by the capitalist system." In that progressive circle of his childhood—the circle of the La Follette family and the reformist bureaucrats and academics of Madison, Wisconsin—"American patriotism, redistributionist economics, anticommunism, and Deweyan pragmatism went together easily and naturally. I think of that circle as typical of the reformist American left of the first half of the century."

Rorty is an old liberal, and he deplores the way in which, in the 1960s, the left pitted radicals against liberals. At the same time, as was the pattern then among liberal parents of radical children, he is a good liberal in being very "understanding" of why people such as he had to be excommunicated for a time. Of the radicals he says, "Their loss of patience was the result of perfectly justified, wholly sincere moral indignation—moral indignation which, the New Left rightly sensed, we reformists were too tired and too battered to feel." At the same time, he pleads that he and those like him should now be welcomed back into the fold. The academic theorists of the cultural left—those who have been distracted by "mostly apocalyptic French and German philosophy" at the expense of political economy—must recognize that they now need as allies "what remains of the pre-sixties reformist left." What remains is, in his view, substantial. "That saving remnant consists largely of labor lawyers and labor organizers, congressional staffers, low-level bureaucrats hoping to rescue the welfare state from the Republicans, journalists, social workers, and people who work for foundations." Rorty's description of the saving remnant is pretty much like the conspiracy that gives some conservatives nightmares.

His hope for the future is in the universities that will once again recognize that they are the training ground for the formation of intellectuals, meaning people committed to social justice. "Each new generation of students ought to think of American leftism as having a long and glorious history," he writes. And his hope is in labor unions that are devoted to the real politics of putting an end to

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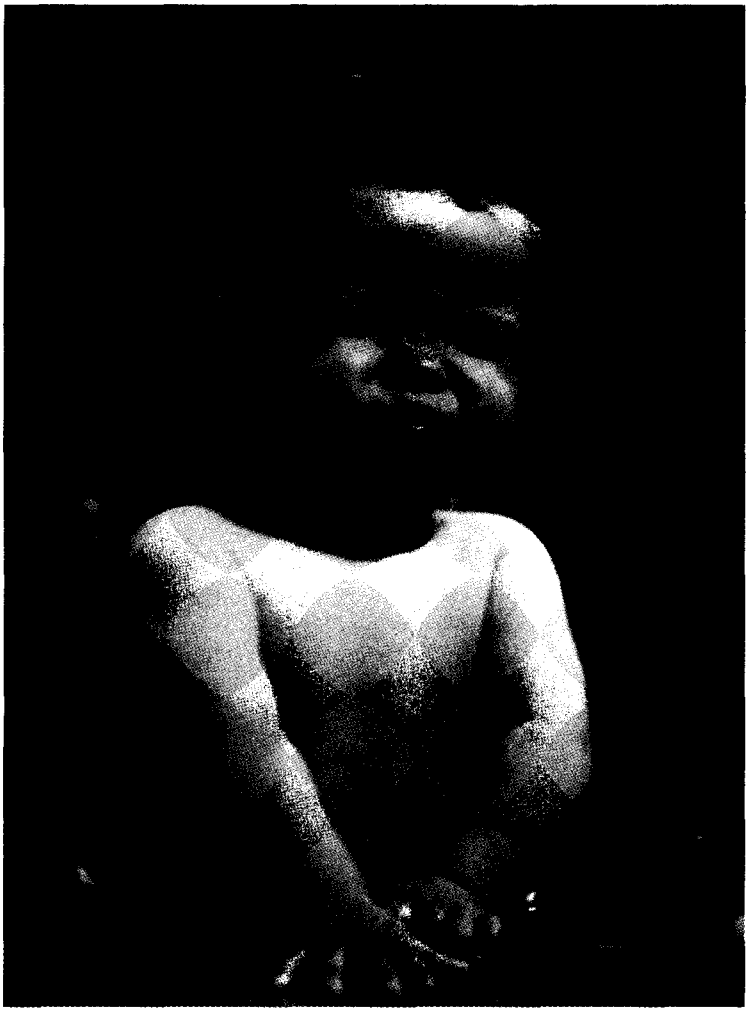

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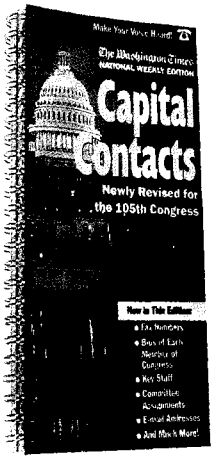

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capitalist exploitation. "If the intellectuals and the unions could ever get back together again, and could reconstitute the kind of left which existed in the forties and fifties, the first decade of the twenty-first century might conceivably be a Second Progressive Era." Rorty's is a wan hope, for he seems to know that between the Foucauldian academics and the besieged unionism of John Sweeney's AFL-CIO a great gulf is fixed. *Achieving Our Country* is a poignant plea to heal that breach, and since Rorty knows that his book will be read more by professors than by plumbers, he stretches his liberalism to appease both the academic apocalypticists of despair and the leftists of sexual and cultural liberation. They have made mistakes, but he understands and is ready to forgive. They are not the enemy. The enemy is the right.

The Remnant at a Loss

Achieving Our Country is a curious book, but a useful study in stereotypes. After all that has happened in recent decades, Rorty's left is defined, quite simply, by socialism. To his credit, he has always wanted to be an anti-Communist socialist, but a socialist nonetheless. It follows that Rorty's right is defined by what he views as uncritical support for laissez faire capitalism. Over the years few thinkers have done as much as Rorty to advance theories of "anti-foundationalism." All "truths," he has taught, are socially constructed "all the way down." Now he is distressed that his academic epigones have extended deconstructionist theory to his socialist dream, and are not amenable to being converted to his messianic religion of America as the Redeemer Nation of limitless possibilities.

Rorty and his "saving remnant" of old liberals are at a loss. The left that has turned to cultural politics has long since abandoned Rorty's all too simple stereotype of the right. In its promotion of "reproductive rights," "alternative families," "same-sex marriage," "multiculturalism," and much else, the left is on the front line of what counts as real politics today. Rorty is an echo of an earlier time. He quotes Grandfather Rauschenbusch railing against capitalist "servants of Mammon . . . who have cloaked their extortion with the gospel of Christ." Such are the fusty clichés of history book stereotypes. The clichés are untouched by the reality of the moral, social, and cultural conflicts at the heart of contemporary politics. In his fixation on the economic, Rorty is, ironically, the perfect counterpart to much of the "country club" leadership of the Republican Party. For instance, not once in *Achieving Our Country* is there a mention of abortion, the single most determinative question in the alignment of the forces in cultural and moral conflict today, which is to say in the real politics of our time. Nor is it an accident that the single most important variable in attitudes toward abortion—and most other issues in conflict—is religious commitment. Not, of course, commitment to the religion of Whitman and Dewey. As John Dewey found out in 1934 when he published his creed, *A Common Faith*, most Americans already had a religion and were not inclined to exchange it for his.

Now Richard Rorty, heir to the mantle of Dewey's pragmatism, is discovering the price of the anti-foundationalism that he so successfully championed. Without foundations, there are no truths that can mandate radical change, and the stereotypes of left and right by which he defines "social justice," along with his religio-patriotic flights of "pure, joyous hope" in limitless change, seem no more than quaint and fanciful. Without foundations, choices are finally arbitrary, and Rorty's reasons for choosing the failed political atheism that is one step removed from the liberal Protestant pulpit is less than convincing. With Whitman, he affirms the "refusal to believe in the existence of Truth, in the sense of something not made by human hands, something which has authority over human beings." Rorty's truth is not immune from that great refusal. People, including most intellectuals on the left, might be forgiven for questioning why the truth of Rorty's social justice should have authority over them, or over Rorty, for that matter. Pragmatism as a philosophy, its proponents insist, is more than a matter of what works, but it ought to work better than that.

FT

BRINGING MATTERS TO A HEAD

There are some things, says George McKenna of City College of New York, that simply are not to be discussed. Inherent racial differences is one of them. Distinctive gender roles is another. Defending the Holocaust is yet another. But suppose—just suppose—that in the name of free academic discourse the uncrossable boundaries were crossed. On the Holocaust, for instance, asks McKenna, what if a free-thinking academic were to argue thus: "The Nazis did terrible things, but their mistake was in the minor premise. They were right to speak of life unworthy of life (*lebensunwertes Leben*), but wrong to apply it wholesale to the Jews. Some Jews, yes, the defective ones. But also defective Gentiles."

Enter the ethics of Peter Singer, an Australian philosopher recently appointed to a professorship of Bioethics at Princeton's Center for Human Values. His claim is, in a nutshell, "Some members of our species are persons: some members of our species are not."

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That's the easy part. It only gets tricky when we try to figure out which ones of us are not persons. Singer has a little list: the unborn, the newborn, old people with Alzheimer's, young people in some condition of unconsciousness, the mentally retarded, and the "defective." In fact, there seem to be only two good reasons for letting anyone live at all: one's potential usefulness to society and the capacity of one's death to make another grieve. (What would happen, McKenna asks, if one were mourned only by socially useless persons?)

Singer has done us a great service, according to McKenna, in working out the full implications of abortion on demand. Singer bites the bullet, McKenna writes: "If we can kill the ones inside, we can kill the ones outside. . . . With murderous logic, Singer has ripped away all the respectable drapery from the culture of death; he has given us a frontal look at it in all its nakedness, without a fig leaf, the full monty." Infanticide is the next step after abortion, and Singer very reasonably suggests a twenty-eight-day trial period in which parents can decide whether or not their baby deserves to live. (Woe to the colicky newborn!) Any sort of defect would be reason enough to dispatch the child, for instance, with Down syndrome, spina bifida, or even hemophilia.

But there's no reason to stop there. If we can kill the defective at one end of the life span, why not eliminate those at the other end too? "Show me the difference," McKenna imagines Singer saying, "between an eight-and-a-half month fetus and a baby —show me the difference between abortion and infanticide—show me the difference between the reasoning powers of a smart dog and a senile old lady—show me why it's more humane to starve her to death than to give her a lethal injection!"

If the worth of defective children and mindless old people can be denied, why not the worth of others who are inconvenient? If we can abort a hemophiliac fetus, lethally inject a screaming three-week-old, and put drooling grandmothers to sleep, why not poison grouchy husbands or mail a bomb to troublesome IRS agents? But McKenna's point is that, in Singer's view, there is nothing inherently valuable about any human being. That would be "speciesism," the fallacy of thinking that there is any material reason why a human being of any age or kind, simply because he is a *human* being, has more worth than, say, a pig or, for that matter, a cockroach. Of course, Singer is opposed to random actions. He insists that killings should be carefully regulated by the state.

McKenna's conclusion is that Singer's way of thinking is to be expected from one who has abandoned the biblical ethic. "The ethic of the specialness of human life is integrally, inseparably tied to Judeo-Christianity," McKenna writes. The inevitable alternative to the old commandments are Singer's new commandments: "Recognize that the worth of human life varies," "Use active means to take innocent human life," and so on. McKenna admits his own discomfort with the conclusion he comes to, but he believes that "there is no purely secular ethic of human life." "Without Judeo-Christianity, all we have is empirical observation, i.e., what we see with our eyes."

McKenna is right in thinking that Singer's appointment at Princeton doesn't have to be a cataclysm. It can, rather, be a catalyst. "We act *into* history," McKenna reminds us, "and what we say and do right now can nudge events in quite different directions. . . . Princeton has declared as legitimate, as academically respectable, a line of reasoning that could culminate in a moral catastrophe. But it could also set the stage for the rediscovery and regeneration of America's moral roots."

McKenna may be right in suggesting that Singer's appointment can helpfully bring matters to a head. Singer has said that he sometimes thinks he and the Pope are the only ones who understand what is involved in the controversy over abortion and related issues. It really is an either/or question. Either, like the Pope, you believe that all human beings—no matter how small, weak, or handicapped—have a right to be protected, or, with Singer, you adopt the doctrine of *lebensunwertes Leben* and recognize the need to eliminate the unfit. I have two cautions, however, about McKenna's incisive critique. First, it is not only the Judeo-Christian ethic that provides a foundation for the protection of human life. Other religious traditions do that too. I expect McKenna would agree, but it needs to be said. With respect to our society, and Western Civilization more generally, he is entirely right in accenting the biblical ethic. Second, we should be hesitant to dismiss the efforts of secularists who try to construct an ethic of moral sanity without reference to metaphysics or the rules of religion and tradition. I share McKenna's skepticism about whether it can be done in a convincing way, but when moral sanity is in short supply we need everybody we can get. In the final judgment, it may be the greater treason to do the right thing for the wrong reason. Short of that final judgment, however, we should be grateful that such secularists are trying to do the right thing.

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THE IMPERTINENCE OF PROTESTING AGGRESSION

An editor at the *New York Times* recently remarked that the use of the term "culture war" is dangerously

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inflammatory. I think it's a useable and useful term. I do not use it as much as the *Times* does, and I think it should not be used in a way that precludes the conversation and persuasion that should be, but is not, the ordinary mode of public discourse. The prestige media is generally blind to its own belligerency in the culture war; it champions as courageous the exercise of free speech that is vituperative and slanderous while simultaneously calling for civility, and condemning as uncivil even the measured responses of those who are slandered. Perhaps because the remark of the editor was on my mind, I was struck by several items in just this morning's *Times*. Two cases illustrate the point.

In the arts section there is a long and laudatory profile by Alan Riding of the recent Nobel laureate in literature, José Saramago. The novels and other writings of this Portuguese writer have for years been noted for their strident atheism and attacks on the Catholic Church. When the Nobel was announced, the semi-official Vatican paper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, noted that, for the second year in a row, the Nobel in literature had been given to someone conspicuous for the virulence of his anti-Catholicism. Last year it went to Dario Fo of Italy, who is less a writer than a comedian in the music hall tradition of Benny Hill. He has, for instance, a routine in which an aged pope, hobbling on his cane, gropes young girls. Really hilarious stuff. The *Times* notes that the Vatican is not happy that the Nobel has again gone to "someone it perceives to be antireligious." That "perceives" is a nice touch. You know how thin-skinned those Catholics are.

Saramago was a staunch Stalinist and is still an unreconstructed member of the Communist Party. That doesn't faze Mr. Riding. He writes, "Perhaps most intriguing is this atheist writer's fascination with religion. In [his book] *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ*, it is apparent that he knows his Bible, and he treats the figure of Jesus with compassion, as a victim of a power struggle between God and the Devil. But his underlying message is that religion has turned man against man in wars, massacres, exterminations, autos-da-fe and the like, 'all in the name of God.'" It is presumably very creative to point out that terrible things have been done in the name of religion, and to depict the Church as being on the side of the Devil against a God in whom the writer does not believe. According to Saramago, Jesus is of course the representative of the revolutionary proletariat, and of course there is no mention of the horrors perpetrated in the name of atheism by the Soviet Union, Maoist China, and others. Alan Riding finds this cliché of agitprop hack-writing "most intriguing."

In response to the Vatican displeasure with the award of the Nobel to Fo and Comrade Saramago, the *Times* quotes the latter: "Why does the Vatican get involved in these things? Why doesn't it keep itself busy with prayers? Why doesn't it instead open its cupboards and reveal the skeletons it has inside?" In sum, how dare the Vatican interfere in the elevated world of literature just because the Catholic Church is viciously traduced? What business is that of the Vatican? The Nobel laureate mugger is offended by the impertinent protest of the muggee. Perhaps it would have been wiser if *L'Osservatore Romano* had not commented and thus inadvertently bestowed a certain status upon the Nobel Prize for Literature. But, despite its history, the Nobel, like the *New York Times*, should not be excluded from the circle of conversation by the friends of civility. Attention should be paid, in the hope that their incivility is not incorrigible.

Pushing the Hot Buttons

The second item this morning is the *Times*' editorial on the narrow (seven to six) vote by which the Miami-Dade County Commission in Florida approved a "gay rights" law. Of course the *Times*, which is undoubtedly the most influential voice of the gay movement in the country, is pleased by the vote, but the editors note that their victory is fragile. The popular defeat of a similar law twenty years ago under the leadership of actress Anita Bryant "spurred the rise of the religious right," the editors observe, and the same thing could happen again. By passing the ordinance, the civic, business, and political leaders show how much they have "grown" in the interim, but there is a problem with the people. The editors note that, since the ordinance exempted religious organizations, it was not opposed by the Catholic archdiocese. But there is still the Christian Coalition and other obstacles to progress.

"The population of the county has shifted in ways that could lessen support for gay rights," the editorial observes. "Its residents are poorer, fewer of them are Jewish or middle class, and many more of them are socially conservative Roman Catholic Hispanic immigrants than a generation ago." If there is a referendum on the ordinance, "it will be a pitched battle that could charge the national political atmosphere once again." "With the next presidential election in sight, neither the Christian Coalition nor gay activists who felt they played an important role in Bill Clinton's victory will want to lose the second battle of Miami." Talk about inflammatory. The editors push the hot buttons: liberal Jews; the famously poor, uneducated, and easily led "religious right"; culturally benighted Hispanics; Catholicism and immigration. It is a potent mixture for the anticipated conflagration that is "the second battle of Miami." The editors may well be right in their political analysis of what is happening in Miami, and the paper is legally entitled to applaud the antireligious ravings of unrepentant Stalinists, but it would become the

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editors to refrain from lecturing others about the incivility of speaking about the culture war which their paper is so aggressively waging.

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THEIR HISTORY AND OURS

Those who have not read the book itself know from Gilbert Meilaender's insightful review essay of it (November 1997) that Oliver O'Donovan's *Desire of the Nations* is an argument to be reckoned with. O'Donovan was our Erasmus Lecturer last year, and that was the occasion of a very lively and productive exchange on biblical truth and the right ordering of society. A special issue of *Studies in Christian Ethics* is given to responses to *Desire*, along with O'Donovan's response to the responses. Rabbi David Novak and I both wrote responses, and both touched on O'Donovan's treatment of Jewish-Christian relations and Israel. In his response to O'Donovan, Stanley Hauerwas proposed that Jewish-Christian questions should be approached from the Shoah. O'Donovan does not agree.

He writes: "I can understand why the Shoah is a deeply preoccupying theme in Jewish reflection, and long will be. I can understand why it is a preoccupying theme in German reflection, and therefore also in Christian German reflection. I can understand why the Vatican, given its entanglement with the powers in the Second World War, could not just let the matter lie. But I cannot take the Shoah seriously *as a Christian event*. I can feel implicated and ashamed by the thirteenth-century anti-Jewish rhetoric of that great English bishop-theologian, Robert Grosseteste, to whose diocese and university I belong. I can recognize his logic, an anti-capitalist logic, as a Christian logic; and so I can acknowledge it as my own logic, too, and acknowledge responsibility for such careless exposition as allowed that logic to feed unthinking prejudices. I can see that there was a history of anti-Jewish attitudes in Christendom, fed by Christian mistakes, which, as a Christian theologian, I have a duty to identify, acknowledge, and set right. But I cannot see that the Shoah is derived from any spiritual history other than that of modern neo-paganism. As a citizen of the United Kingdom I can acknowledge collective responsibility for how Palestine was administered before 1948, and can understand how difficulties faced by Jews and Palestinians today were fed by characteristic failures in the British colonial imagination. . . . But any attempt on the part of a British Christian to claim a share of responsibility for the Shoah would be, at best, a tasteless piece of play-acting; and at worst, what perverted desire to command good and evil, I wonder, might possibly motivate such a claim? When it comes to repentance, the first condition of sincerity is sobriety."

Sobriety is certainly in order. Too often in Jewish-Christian exchanges, Jews play the Holocaust as trump, and Christians, on cue, engage in unseemly and implausible rites of self-denigration. But neither is it satisfactory to say that the "Shoah is derived from [no] spiritual history other than that of modern neo-paganism." To be sure, Hitler was as anti-Christian as he was anti-Jewish (and, in significant part, anti-Christian *because* he was anti-Jewish), and the policies of the Holocaust were based on neo-pagan ideology. Nonetheless, many Christians, in Germany and elsewhere, were complicit in "the teaching of contempt" toward Jews over the centuries. Without that teaching, it seems unlikely that Hitler could have targeted the Jews as he did, or would have had the measure of acquiescence in his policies that he did. Christians far removed in time and space from the Shoah should nonetheless have a vibrant sense of solidarity in the Body of Christ that enables us, indeed requires us, to recognize our involvement in both the terrible sins and heroic virtues of those who were there.

In this connection, I recommend a little booklet just out from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Catholics Remember the Holocaust*. It includes fifteen statements from various episcopal conferences and individual bishops in Europe and North America, as well as the Holy See's "We Remember: Reflections on the Shoah," with accompanying commentaries. Also included is a useful bibliography on these questions. Oliver O'Donovan is surely right that our reflection on the Jewish-Christian connection should not begin, and certainly cannot end, with the Holocaust. The Holocaust stands against, and for the most part outside, the history that is ours as Jews and Christians. But, it is important to remember, not entirely outside. Treating the Holocaust as the central event in Jewish-Christian relations, however, grievously distorts both Judaism and Christianity. As David Novak has written elsewhere, "As a Jew, I do not get up in the morning to curse Hitler but to glorify the God of Israel."

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ This from her obituary in the *New York Times*. Several years before she died at age ninety-seven,

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Paula Kissinger, Henry's mother, fell in the kitchen and was unconscious for several hours. She was put on a life-support system, and later the doctors wanted to remove it, telling Henry that, if she survived, she would not be able to think or speak. Henry replied, "You don't know my mother." Several days later she awoke and asked him, "What day is it?" He told her it was Tuesday, and she said, "Cancel my ten o'clock dentist appointment." Good for her. Good for her son.

■ It is perhaps an encouraging sign when the lawyers are worried. All this talk about the judicial usurpation of politics is getting through. Philip S. Anderson, president of the American Bar Association, writes in the *ABA Journal* that his group, together with the Conference of Chief Justices, the Conference of State Court Administrators, and the League of Women Voters is sponsoring a national conference to educate people "on public perceptions of our judiciary." In addition to a flock of professors, Supreme Court Justices Anthony M. Kennedy and Stephen Breyer will lead the effort. They are, one might note, Justices who are more a part of the problem than of the solution. But then, the stated purpose of this "educational" project is to defend the "independence of the judiciary," a.k.a. the judicial usurpation of politics. According to Mr. Anderson, in the American founding, "The judiciary was intended to be a check on the other branches of government to protect the people against an abuse of power." That would come as news to Madison, Hamilton, and others who were quite explicit about three branches, each designed to check against abuses by the others. The ABA and the other sponsors are obviously, if understandably, engaged in a propaganda effort to defend the status quo, whereby the judiciary arrogates to itself not only the sole right to interpret the Constitution but also the right to make law and direct the execution of the laws it makes. In this scheme, the other two branches become ancillary to the judiciary, the superiority (i.e., "independence") of which is not to be questioned. As to the presumably self-governing people, they get to vote from time and time, and to hope their representatives will plead their case before our judicial rulers. The ABA has good reason to be concerned about "public perceptions of our judiciary"—and about public worry that the judiciary, and with it the government, really does belong to the legal establishment that it serves.

■ I have already mentioned this quality newsletter written by David Blankenhorn of the Institute for American Values. It's called *Propositions*, and the following item on a question of great importance gives you some idea of the incisive manner in which it cuts through the cant: "Which variable most accurately predicts the likelihood of criminal behavior by a young man? His skin color? His family's income? His or his parents' level of education? Where he lives? Or whether or not he lives with his father? Well, all of these variables matter; everything is connected; no single study is definitive; and blah, blah, blah. But the scholarly evidence continues to mount that fatherlessness is the single most important predictor. A new study by Cynthia C. Harper of the University of Pennsylvania and Sara S. McLanahan of Princeton examines a nationally representative sample of 6,403 teenage boys who were followed over a period of fifteen years, up to their early thirties. Of boys who were living in mother-headed families at age fourteen, about 13 percent had been incarcerated by their early thirties. For boys from father-present homes, the figure is 5 percent. But of course one could argue —and I have found, whenever I speak to groups on this issue, that many people strongly believe—that this finding, properly understood, actually points less to father-absence 'per se' than to other, presumably more potent variables such as poverty or racism. So in their study, Harper and McLanahan 'controlled' for a wide variety of factors, including race, income, residential instability, urban location, neighborhoods with a high proportion of single mothers, parents' education, the child's cognitive ability, and child support payments. None of these factors could explain—could do what some scholars call 'make go away'—the strong relationship between fatherlessness and the risk of incarceration. Even after all the controls, fatherless boys were twice as likely as boys living with two parents to have been incarcerated. Moreover: 'For each year spent in a nonintact family, the odds of incarceration rise 5 percent.' Can't stepfathers substitute in this regard for fathers? Apparently not: 'Youths living in stepparent families face odds of incarceration 2.9 times as high as those in mother-father households.' In fact: 'The odds for youths from stepparent families are similar to those from youths who do not live with any parents, although these children, in addition to not having any parents care for them, are selected for more difficult family circumstances.' When single mothers remarry, it seems that many boys do not so much gain a father as lose some of their mother's attention and support. Another recent study by William S. Comanor and Llad Phillips of the University of California at Santa Barbara reaches similar conclusions: 'Examining the likelihood that boys will be stopped, charged, or convicted of a crime between the ages of fourteen and twenty-two, we find that the single most important factor, more relevant even than family income, is the presence of the father in the home. The probability of delinquency, measured in this way, is typically twice as high in cases where the father is absent than when he is present.' This study, too, looked at the role of stepfathers and boyfriends:

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'There is strong evidence that delinquency rates are lower when the mother is alone with her son than when she has invited another man into the house. To be sure, these rates are not as low as when the father is present, but they clearly indicate the stepfathers or boyfriends are not the solution. There is no statistical difference between rates with father-mother families and those with fathers and stepmothers, while delinquency rates are much higher with mothers and stepfathers.'"

■ Whose ball is in whose court is not entirely certain at the moment. Rome and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) planned to have before the end of 1998 a festive joint signing of the Joint Declaration (JD) on justification by faith, which would signify a lifting of the mutual anathemas of the sixteenth century. But then things were thrown into a cocked hat by Rome's raising of challenges to what had presumably been agreed (see "Setback in Rome," Public Square, October 1998). Now Rome insists that its questions about JD were misinterpreted, and it wants to go ahead with the signing. Ishmael Noko, general secretary of LWF, says, "We had hoped we could have signed by now, but joint signature can take place only if there is a common understanding of what is being signed." Bishop Christian Krause, president of LWF, thinks it will take a while to get to the joint signing. "We are in the last phase of a thirty-year dialogue. What is six more months?" Rome says it expects a joint signing before the end of the year.

■ The same might be said of Stanford, Princeton, or Yale, but let's stick with Harvard for the moment. The case for affirmative action (a.k.a. quotas), which was recently reiterated by Harvard's ex-President Derek Bok at book length, is that certain sectors of the population are "underrepresented." Ron Unz, the author of the successful California initiative limiting bilingual education, points out that the flip side of that is that other sectors are overrepresented. Asians, for example, are 2 to 3 percent of the American population but are nearly 20 percent of Harvard undergraduates. Jews are 2 percent of the population, but a quarter to a third of Harvard students identify themselves as Jewish. Thus Asians and Jews are approximately 50 percent of the student body, leaving the other half for 95 percent of the country. There are quota slots for black (8 percent) and Hispanic (7 percent) enrollment, and then there are a large number of foreign students. Thus, says Mr. Unz, "it seems likely that non-Jewish white Americans represent no more than a quarter of Harvard undergraduates, even though this group constitutes nearly 75 percent of the population at large, resulting in a degree of underrepresentation far more severe than that of blacks, Hispanics, or any other minority group." Even among non-Jewish whites, given the number of Northeastern WASPs at Harvard, one might ask about the representation of, say, Southern evangelical Protestants or Italian Catholics, who surely belong in any school that cherishes "diversity." Defenders of affirmative action might propose a policy of drastically reducing the number of Asians and Jews, but that, notes Mr. Unz, "would be controversial to say the least." He concludes that the much-discussed hostility of "angry white males" to affirmative action may, in fact, reflect the great majority of Americans who feel discriminated against by institutions such as Harvard that are springboards for entrance into the country's leadership elite. The entire idea of representation (whether "over" or "under") is inherently unworkable and sorely in need of debunking. Institutions—whether universities, businesses, or even churches—are designed to fulfill some purpose, and different people will be differently qualified for or interested in that purpose. The institution should faithfully represent the purpose for which it was designed, not the demographic data provided by the U.S. Census. Unless the promoters of quotas in elite universities are prepared to drastically reduce the number of Asians and Jews, and to open such schools to identifiable groups that are now excluded, their claim to be concerned about justice—even justice-as-representation—rings hollow. But on the entire question of affirmative action, those who want to end it, not mend it, have, in my judgment, the better part of the argument.

■ The new norms for implementing the 1990 document *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* could be "disastrous" for Catholic higher education in the U.S., say the editors of *America*. The norms require that presidents of institutions, teachers of theology, and a majority of the boards of trustees be "faithful Catholics." *America* opines: "For Catholic colleges and universities that live in a world of accrediting associations and government regulation, the adoption of such norms would reverse three decades of development." Precisely.

■ Massachusetts has the third-highest percentage of wealthy people—those making more than $100,000 per year—and ranks dead last among the states in giving to charity. Arkansas ranks first, Mississippi second, followed by South Dakota, Louisiana, and Oklahoma—all among the nine poorest states. Might it have something to do with the Bay State being so heavily Catholic? Quite possibly. Catholics hear little about stewardship and almost nothing about tithing. In addition, where institutions are old and well-established, people tend to assume that somebody else is taking care of the bills. Moreover, Catholic parishes tend to be very large and there is a correlation between large parishes and low giving. Then too, Massachusetts has a tradition of big government (remember "Taxachusetts"?) that

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discourages voluntary giving. Such factors help explain but do not excuse. (Please hold the letters. I know there are exceptions. For instance, the Boston subscriber who just sent a very generous check in support of FT. May her tribe multiply.)

■ In a generally balanced survey of the interaction of religion and U.S. foreign policy, historian Leo Ribuffo of George Washington University concludes with his worries—some legitimate and some a bit far-fetched—about the implications of the recently enacted law requiring the U.S. to take religious persecution into account in its dealings with other countries. Professor Ribuffo, with apologies for sounding like an echo from the sixties, says he is concerned about "cultural imperialism." "Finally," he writes in the *National Interest*, "is it ever acceptable for countries to preserve atheistic systems or religious homogeneity?" "If not, then non-Christians might plausibly complain that [the act] promotes the world's foremost evangelical religion, Christianity, which also happens to be the majority religion of the United States." If one believes that religious freedom is a human right—a proposition unanimously affirmed by the entire human rights tradition—then the answer to his question has to be in the negative. The conclusion that Prof. Ribuffo draws from that might be taken as an inadvertent acknowledgment that there is a necessary connection between human rights and Christianity. It is at least somewhat strange that the *National Interest* should be joining with Chinese and sundry other dictatorships in claiming that U.S. concern about human rights is an instance of cultural imperialism.

■ Once again, Alan Wolfe's *One Nation After All*, a rather sanguine book based on interviews with two hundred presumably typical middle-class Americans which concludes that our chief, and maybe only, virtue as a people is tolerance. William Galston writes in the *Public Interest*: "I think Wolfe pulls his punches a bit; the evidence he presents permits us to raise far more serious questions. A choice-based conception of social life leads to instrumental bonds, a cult of conflict avoidance, an absence of real engagement, and a loss of seriousness. Worst of all, it is hard to see how this new morality provides any basis for sacrifice, in either personal or civic life. Marriages are ended when they become inconvenient; religions are selected like new fashions in the mall and then cast aside when they cease to meet our personal needs. Forty years ago, young men assumed that they would have to serve in the armed forces, regardless of how they felt about it. Today, fewer and fewer have any experience (civilian or military) of service undertaken out of civic, moral, and legal duty rather than a personal quest for meaning (or college subsidies). This new morality—do what you choose, when you choose, without fear of legal coercion or social disapproval—is an experiment without precedent in human history. Perhaps it will succeed; I doubt it. At some point, we will be called upon for sacrifices that we can't pay others to make on our behalf. And then we will see whether the self-protective nonjudgmentalism Wolfe so ably describes constitutes an adequate basis for a free society."

■ I see the government of Israel, through its ambassador to the Holy See, has taken it upon itself to tell the Catholic Church that it must not canonize Pius XII. The Pope's "cause" was entered in 1965 and is presumably moving along at the listless pace for which the Curia is famous. The intervention of a foreign state in the Church's deliberation about who should be recognized as a saint did raise a few eyebrows among clerks who have accumulated a vast number of testimonials to the sanctity and heroism of Pius XII, including Jewish testimonials. There is, for instance, the Anti-Defamation League *Bulletin* of October 1958 ("Pope Pius XII and the Jews"), which offers unstinting praise for his efforts on behalf of the Jews throughout the war. The article cites the *Jewish News Bulletin*, which said upon the June 1944 entrance of the Allies into Rome, "The full story of the help given to our people by the Church cannot be told, for obvious reasons, until after the war." After the war it was told, for a time. Until Rolf Hochhuth's play *The Deputy* in 1964 and the decision of some circles in organized Jewry that ingratitude and the smearing of the Catholic Church generally, and of Pius XII in particular, would be good for the Jews. It is most regrettable that the government of Israel seems to agree. Such attacks are not good for anybody.

■ I suppose it is to be expected at the end of a century. I've noticed the number of writers taking a long look backward, and especially the frequency of the thought that the big horrors started with World War I. Allan Massie writes in the *Spectator* (London): "The final irony is that half a century after the second of these wars we have arrived at the position that the first was supposed by its advocates to have been fought to prevent: the creation of a European Union dominated by Germany—a union, moreover, into which we have reluctantly been drawn in contradiction of the wisest principles of British policy for centuries. Choosing to fight in 1914 condemned Germany and Europe to Hitler, Russia and Europe to Stalin, the whole continent, and then the world, to war again twenty-five years later, and has finally condemned us to our present condition, forced to choose between being a satellite of the USA or a province of the European Union." Or what if the terms of surrender had been different in World War I, or if the Hapsburg Empire and the Czar had been left standing? Such thoughts provide a Niebuhrian sense of the ironies of history, a salutary antidote when reading some contemporary Wilsonians on Pax Americana.

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■ In a comment titled "Grasping for the Gold" (November 1998), I noted the increasingly unseemly business of lawyers and Jewish agencies who are exploiting the Holocaust for profit. Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League has now expressed similar concerns. "A new 'industry' has sprung up," he writes, "spearheaded by lawyers and institutions, in an effort to get what they call 'justice' for Holocaust victims." "As a Holocaust survivor, I question for whom they speak and how they define 'justice.' The focus must remain on discovering the truth, on revealing and owning up to the past." Individuals who have specific claims have a right to pursue them, but lawyers who view Holocaust survivors as "clients" for class-action bonanzas are something else. "There is no place for ambulance chasers in this serious and sacred undertaking," says Foxman. He is ambivalent about the $1.25 billion that the Swiss banks finally came up with. "Yes, we got a check, but what about morality, reconciliation, and confronting the past? The Swiss have yet to come to grips with the realities that their history, not the Jews, is their enemy, and that settlement was not blackmail but a moral debt they should have paid voluntarily." But of course it was a kind of blackmail; the money was extracted under dire threats by the World Jewish Congress and others against Swiss financial and business interests. Predictably, the result was an increase of anti-Jewish sentiment in Switzerland, and in other countries under similar pressure. "I fear that all the talk about Holocaust-era assets is skewing the Holocaust," Foxman writes, "making the century's last word on the Holocaust that the Jews died not because they were Jews, but because they had bank accounts, gold, art, and property." Mr. Foxman's challenge to a Holocaust restitution industry that has gone wildly out of control is most welcome. There are many lessons to be learned from the Holocaust, and Mr. Foxman is on solid ground in fearing that "Those lessons will be diminished and skewed by the efforts to put money over morality."

■ For many years I edited *Forum Letter*, an independent Lutheran publication, and I still read it with appreciation. The December issue discusses the "Formula of Agreement" by which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) established full altar and pulpit fellowship (comparable to what Catholics mean by "full communion") with the Presbyterian Church (USA) and other Reformed bodies. Historically, Lutherans and Calvinists have sharply disagreed about, inter alia, the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. The concern is that the Lutheran insistence on the Real Presence is gravely compromised, if not abandoned, in the "Formula of Agreement." Pastor Frank Senn of the ELCA believes, however, that the church assembly's action on this question is but part of a much bigger problem: "The highest authority in the ELCA is a 1,000-member churchwide assembly that is brought together for a week every two years. Such an assembly can be subject to mood swings in its own deliberations and in the wider church in which truth becomes almost irrelevant. Even ecumenical councils could be subject to mood swings, but what balances the force of passing moods is an awareness on the part of bishops and theologians that they represent the apostolic tradition in the decisions they must make. The ELCA churchwide assembly is not capable of 'teaching' with authority, in spite of its constitutional legitimacy, because it is 60 percent composed of lay people who are not, in the words of the Augsburg Confession, Article 14, 'regularly called' to the teaching office in the Church. So the collapse of confessional doctrine, ecclesiology, liturgical norms, and moral teaching follows as a matter of course. We see this reflected in the decisions of this past summer. This churchwide assembly entered into full communion with churches with whom we do not have agreement in eucharistic faith and practice; it could not seize an opportunity to begin a process of restoring a polity [the historic episcopate] that its own Confessions prefer; it did not think to remove from a statement on *The Use of the Means of Grace* a provision that allows bishops to authorize lay persons to preside at the Eucharist; and it was unable to order the church's board of pensions to stop paying for abortions through its health plan. In each case the decision made required no change of the status quo. I wonder what would have been the fate of the *Formula of Agreement* if it had required polity changes on our part. This is the actual ELCA authority-structure with which other churches must deal once we move past the stage of dialogue to the stage of implementing real ecclesiastical-political relationships of full communion or altar and pulpit fellowship."

■ R. C. Sproul, visiting professor at Knox Theological Seminary in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, has been one of the most persistent and strident critics of the initiative known as "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" or ECT. In a recent issue of *Modern Reformation* he again goes on the attack. Referring to the first statement, "ECT I," issued in 1994 (see FT, May 1994), Sproul smells mendacity. That statement said that evangelicals and Catholics affirm together "justification by grace through faith because of Christ." Four and a half years later, Sproul writes: "In a letter circulated to the signatories of ECT I written by Richard John Neuhaus, the chief Roman Catholic architect of the document, he asks the question, 'Do we mean the same thing by the words used?' He answers his own

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question with the emphatic words: 'of course not.'" What I wrote in May 1994 was this: "That is a fact; we do together affirm that formulation [about justification]. Do we all mean exactly the same thing by it? Of course not. The fact is that there are very significant differences between and among both evangelicals and Catholics as to how that formulation is most adequately adumbrated." Fulfilling the promise made in that first statement, ECT participants have continued to work together on theological problems and in 1997 produced a common statement on justification, "The Gift of Salvation" (see FT, January 1998). To suggest that my earlier letter applies to that later statement is, to put it gently, misleading. The search for understanding begins with saying what we can say together, and conscientiously exploring what we mean by what we say in order to say it better. That is what ECT has been doing over the years. Honest critics can be helpful to that endeavor.

■ Here is a picture by Stephen Kroninger in the *Progressive*, under the title "Honest Living." A cartoon Jesus is nailed to the cross, crown of thorns and wounds and all, holding a smoking rifle. At the foot of the cross, in a pool of blood, lies a contorted body in white coat and stethoscope. In case you don't get it, the background is a faded newspaper article with the headline "Sniper Kills Abortion Doctor in His Home." This is what, in some circles, passes as "progressive." The artist, clearly, is in need of *loving* admonition. His e-mail address, which he appends to his cartoon, is skron@inch.com.

■ The asserted right to sex without consequences reaches what may be a new low. According to the *Washington Post*, Peter Wallis and Kellie Smith shacked up for a while, she got pregnant and now has given birth to a baby girl. Wallis says she had agreed to use the pill and is suing her for becoming pregnant against his will, accusing her of "intentionally acquiring and misusing" his semen. Smith contends that she was on the pill and got pregnant by accident. In addition, her legal filing contends that she could not have stolen his sperm because "he surrendered any right of possession to his semen when he transferred it during voluntary sexual intercourse." Wallis is worried about having to pay child support and charges Smith with breach of contract. Some men's groups are supportive of Wallis, complaining it is not right that women alone have the choice of aborting or giving birth. Professor Barbara Katz Rothman of City University of New York counters with, "You are coming up against an absolute fact of life. Men are not the ones who get pregnant." Facts of life yet. Even absolute facts of life. Maybe there is still hope.

■ Let me stipulate, as the lawyers say, that I have great respect for the work of Dean Hoge, professor of sociology at Catholic University. We have welcomed his writing in these pages. I do wonder, however, about his recent article in *America* which reports, among many other things, that only 11 percent of young Catholics in the U.S. (age eighteen to twenty-nine) agree with the Church's teaching that premarital sex is wrong. "It will take all the wisdom and charity we can muster to manage today's polarization on these topics," Hoge writes. "The chance of bringing back the pre-1960s assent of Catholics to Church teachings on sexuality is zero. We need to have an open discussion of the present situation and new efforts to forge moral teachings that are authoritative and inspiring to tomorrow's Catholics." Certainly we want to inspire tomorrow's Catholics, and today's, for that matter, but it is not clear how the Church can "forge" moral teachings that contradict what the Church, claiming the authority of Scripture and tradition, has taught in the past. And what is this about "bringing back" the assent of an earlier era? Data in the same article indicate that in 1970 only 18 percent of those who were then the "young Catholics" agreed with the Church about premarital sex. The difference between 11 and 18 percent is not all that big. Is it not possible that, then and now, there is some connection between being young and unmarried, on the one hand, and thinking that premarital sex is okay, on the other? I don't have methodologically rigorous social-scientific research findings to back it up, but common sense and human nature do suggest an answer to that question.

■ "Never apologize. Never explain." I've seen that attributed to different people, and it has always struck me as superlatively dumb. Never to apologize and never to explain is the end of friendship and reflection. But maybe the people who say that aren't interested in friendship or reflection. And I probably should not even have mentioned it, since here I am complaining about something in a comment that I intended as an apology for seeming to complain so much. I know people really like this section of the journal because they so persistently and emphatically say they do. But I confess that, in putting together this month's installment of The Public Square, I am dissatisfied. It occurs to me that too much of it is too cranky. "How can you comment on so much that is depressing," a reader asks, "and remain so cheerful?" The question prompted the reflection that I do not comment as often as I probably should on so much I come across that is cheering. I expect I should do something about that. I mentioned some months back the editors of a magazine who do not call this section The Public Square but The Public Scold. They may have a point. Those who like this section the way it has been for almost ten years should not worry; I'm not undergoing a delayed mid-life crisis, and there's little

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chance that I'm going to flip into a mode of cock-eyed optimism. But my new year's resolve in writing this commentary is to avail myself of more opportunities to praise, or at least to commend what is commendable. We'll see how well I keep to that. It will not be easy. To cite but one difficulty, I promised that I would, at some point when there is a pause in the political soap opera, do something along the lines of an omnium gatherum reflection on the Clinton presidency, and several of you have reminded me of that promise. I don't know how one can turn that into something edifying. (In the event anybody was wondering, I thought editor Jim Nuechterlein was dead wrong in opposing impeachment, though I shared some of the anxieties that led him into his error.) If you will bear with this self-referential indulgence a bit more, I should say that the above-mentioned dissatisfaction has been gaining on me in the last year. Part of it is that January 10 marked the sixth anniversary of the emergency cancer surgery in which I almost died (some doctors thought I had died), and it is only this year that it has really come home to me that I may in fact be around for a long time. (As you know, five years without any symptoms is usually taken to be the mark of complete remission.) I also want to do different kinds of writing. This January *Appointment in Rome: The Church in America Awakening* was published. That was fun, and the responses have been greatly encouraging. A radically different kind of writing is *Death on a Friday Afternoon: Being an Account of What We Have Done to God*, which will be out from Basic Books later this year. It is a theological-devotional reflection on the seven last words from the cross and, at the risk of immodesty, I think it may be the best thing I have written. (The risk is not so great, since the comparison is only with my own books.) I intend to do more in that genre—very different from the political, ecclesiastical, and culture war contretemps that supply the grist for The Public Square. But again, not to worry; I'm not hieing myself off to a monastery. Although I've thought about it from time to time. I value too much the friendship I have with many thousands of you through this commentary. A further consideration is that my bishop, Cardinal O'Connor, says I should be doing what I'm doing, and I took an oath to obey him. Anyway, I expect I'm addicted to the contretemps. So what is this item about then? Maybe, since I don't send out Christmas cards, never mind one of those end-of-the-year letters, this is simply a response to those of you who have asked how I'm doing. The answer is: Very well, thank you, and, most of all, thank God. Mainly, this is a word of apology and explanation in the service of friendship and reflection. Once again, do not worry; there will, God willing, be another Public Square next month. If I'm not mistaken, I feel a bout of the old crankiness coming on.

■ The deadline is April 5, so, if you're interested, you'd better get moving. It's the annual seminar in beautiful Krakow, Poland, from July 6 through 24, and there are ten fellowships for American students. The subject is "The Free Society and the Third Millennium," and the faculty includes Michael Novak, George Weigel, Father Maciej Zieba, Russell Hittinger, and myself. Fellowships include everything except travel costs to Krakow and back. Applications should be accompanied by a two hundred word paragraph on the nature of liberty, a longer writing sample, a C.V., and a short letter explaining why you want to attend, all to be sent to Erica Carson at American Enterprise Institute, 1150 17th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. For more information, call: 202-862-7152; fax: 202-862-5821; e-mail: ecarson@aei.org.

■ Gary W. Taylor writes from Seminario del Buen, Acapulco, Mexico: "I'm still working on my list of friends (been thinking about it for two years now), but I liked it better in the old days when you pleaded and shared stories of horror and of love to motivate us. That polite little note that we get now is boring." He is referring, of course, to my earlier practice of inviting lists of prospective subscribers to whom we would send free sample copies. We still would. Other readers have said they were irritated by those (I thought ever so entertaining) pleas. Perhaps Mr. Taylor is right and we should reinstitute them. On the other hand, we still haven't received his list. So here, once again, is the boring little note: We will be happy to send a sample issue of this journal to people you think are likely subscribers. Please send names and addresses to FIRST THINGS , 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010 (or e-mail to Ravaughan@aol.com). On the other hand, if they're ready to subscribe, call toll-free 1-800-783-4903.

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Sources: George McKenna essay "Acting Into History," *Human Life Review*, Fall 1998. *New York Times* editorial on the term "culture war," December 3, 1998. Oliver O'Donovan on Christianity and the Holocaust in *Studies in Christian Ethics*, Volume 11, Number 2.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT: Paula Kissinger obituary, *New York Times*, November 16, 1998. Philip S. Anderson on "public perceptions of our judiciary," *ABA Journal*, November 1998. David Blankenhorn on fatherlessness, *Propositions*, Fall 1998. Ron Unz on affirmative action, *Wall Street Journal*, November 16, 1998. On *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and Catholic higher education in the U.S., *America*, November 14, 1998. On earning and giving in Massachusetts, *Boston Globe*, October 25, 1998. Leo Ribuffo on cultural imperialism and human rights, *National Interest*, Summer 1998. William Galston on a choice-based conception of social life, *Public Interest*, Fall 1998. On Israeli ambassador to Vatican urging against canonizing Pius XII, *New York Times*, November 4, 1998. Abraham Foxman on exploiting the Holocaust, *Wall Street Journal*, December 4, 1998. On "Formula of Agreement" in the ELCA, *Forum Letter*, December 1998. R. C. Sproul on ECT, *Modern Reformation*, September/October 1998. On cartoon of Jesus with a smoking rifle, *Progressive*, December 1998. On man suing woman for getting pregnant, *Washington Post*, November 23, 1998. Dean Hoge on young Catholics' views on premarital sex, *America*, November 21, 1998.

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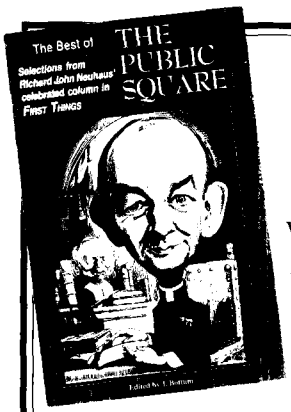

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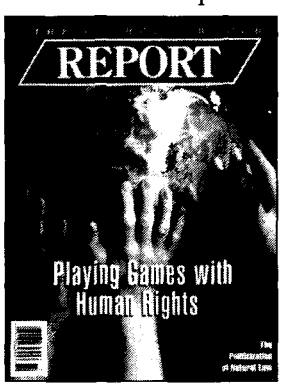

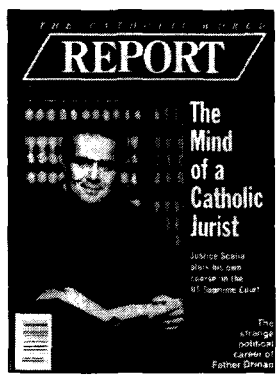

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